

**COMMEMORATIONS AND CONFLICTS IN THE
PRODUCTION OF SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL
PASTS: THE 1952 JAN VAN RIEBEECK
TERCENTENARY FESTIVAL**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how the icon of Jan van Riebeeck acquired a position of prominence in South African public pasts through the government sponsored festival organised in 1952 to commemorate his landing three hundred years previously. From the seventeenth to the mid-twentieth centuries Van Riebeeck and the landing in 1652 had, through commemorative events, school text books and the publication of the Dutch East India Company journal for the period when he was commander at the Cape of Good Hope, acquired different meanings. These ranged from conveying Christianity to southern Africa, to initiating British colonial rule and providing the ancestry for an Afrikaner volk. Using material from the various planning committees for the tercentenary celebrations, newspaper reports, pamphlets, high school year books, interviews with organisers and participants, radio broadcasts and documentary film footage, this thesis argues that the festival in 1952 selected elements from these various pasts to construct a Van Riebeeck as the founder figure of a racially exclusive settler nation in South Africa. The pasts that were produced for this festival of European settler founding often resulted from negotiations between opposing groups over its constituent elements, what events and personalities should be included and excluded and how they should be represented. It was immensely difficult to produce this consensual past, particularly as local identities often clashed with the national pasts the festival was attempting to construct and the audiences viewed the exhibitions and performances in a variety of different ways. There was also a massive boycott of the proceedings by those whom the festival organisers attempted to incorporate into its displays and audiences as, separate, developing 'non-European' ethnic entities. One of the most notable aspects of the boycott campaigns against the festival was that they largely mirrored and inverted its symbols. Instead of subverting the images of the festival, they therefore unintentionally bolstered and sustained their significance in South African public pasts.

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In a thesis of this nature, which is primarily concerned with the construction of public history, the range of people who have contributed to its production is very wide. It encompasses film and radio archivists, environmental activists, advertising agents, secretaries in government departments, curators at museums, sales assistants at second-hand bookshops, students in lectures, guests at dinner parties and even passers-by in the street. While it is not feasible to acknowledge each of these contributions individually, they have enabled me to develop an understanding of how history is produced, contested and received in different ways in the public terrain.

There are, however, many individuals whom I would like to thank specifically for the support that they gave me over the past five years spent while I researched and wrote up this thesis. Andrew Meston, Carol Witz, Patricia Hayes, Uma Mesthrie, John Mason, Chris Saunders, William Frater, Andrew Ball, Rena Sherman and Michele Pickover all helped in locating source material and made interesting and valuable suggestions. Ingrid Scholtz and Wayne Dooling assisted with the translation of Dutch documents. Anriette Esterhuysen and Ran Greenstein not only extended their hospitality to me during research trips to Johannesburg but also, through discussion, encouraged and supported the project. Carolyn Hamilton's comments and incisive questioning helped to provide direction at a stage when the thesis threatened to become bogged down in the almost overwhelming mass of sources on the festival. Andrew Bank read chapters of an early draft and made very useful, detailed comments. Pat van der Spuy proof-read this thesis meticulously, picking up on my inconsistencies, incorrect usage of certain phrases and various other grammatical errors.

There are some special thanks that must be made. The first is to my supervisor Nigel Worden who gave me constant encouragement, directed me to certain material and most importantly, helped me to refine and cohere the ideas I presented. Secondly, I am indebted to my friends and colleagues at the University of the Western Cape, Ciraj Rassool and Gary Minkley. We share a common interest in public history and have worked and taught together on several projects that examine the construction of public images of the past in spheres ranging from festivals to museums and tourism. This has allowed for an incredible cross-fertilisation of ideas that, in turn,

have fed into several of the formulations and the arguments that I develop in this thesis. Lastly, thanks to Josi Frater. She proof- read parts of the thesis, attempting to eradicate some of the long sentences and tautologies. She was also incredibly helpful in collecting material, constantly being on the look out for public images of Van Riebeeck and the festival. But, most of all it was her encouragement and support that sustained me in the venture of writing a PhD thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

JOURNEYS, FESTIVALS AND THE MAKING OF NATIONAL PASTS.

The week of 26 to 31 October 1992 was a hectic one for D F Malan airport in Cape Town. For years relegated to a minor air terminal, largely carrying domestic traffic, strong predictions of an imminent end to white rule in South Africa saw its doors being opened to the international world as, amidst much fanfare and publicity, the first scheduled regular flights from Germany, France and Holland landed on its runways and the first weekly direct non-stop flight from Cape Town to London was inaugurated. The journey from Holland was accorded a special symbolic significance as this was the birthplace of Jan van Riebeeck, the man who had been officially proclaimed, in 1952, as the "founder [in 1652] of the white settlement at the then inhospitable southern tip of Africa".¹ As an acknowledgement of this, the official guest on board flight KL 593 - specially renamed Kaap De Goede Hoop - was the mayor of the town of Culemborg, Jan van Riebeeck's "*geboortestad*" [town of birth]. And, to her surprise, when she landed, there to greet her and present her with a bunch of proteas was none other than the 'son of Culemborg' and now director of the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce, Jan van Riebeeck (Nick Malherbe).²

The arrival of Kaap De Goede Hoop at D F Malan airport was not intended to celebrate the founding of white South Africa but its demise. Mayor Mieke Bloemendaal was representing a town which not only had borne Jan van Riebeeck, but which had also played an active role in *Lagere Overheden Tegen Apartheid* (LOTA) [Local Authorities Against Apartheid], a Dutch anti-apartheid grouping which supported civic organisations in black townships. To cement this relationship she visited Villiersdorp, a small town in the western Cape, met members of the local civic structure and, in what the *Culemborg Courant* claimed was a "*unieke gebeurtenis*" [unique event] for a "*blanke burgemeester*" [white mayor], she spent the

¹South Africa State Information Service, *South Africa's Heritage (1652-1952)*, Pretoria (1952), p.5.

²*Cape Times*, 29 October 1992; *Die Burger*, 29 October 1992.

night in the coloured township of Nuwedorp, sharing a two roomed house with its fifteen other inhabitants.³

But no matter what form of penance Mayor Bloemendaal took she realised that she could not easily discard the mantle of Jan van Riebeeck. "*De komst van Jan van Riebeeck naar Kaapstad is een moment in de geschiedenis waar we niet omheen kunnen*" [The arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in Cape Town is one moment in history which we cannot deny], she told members of the local business community. Nonetheless, she maintained, it was important to realise that Jan van Riebeeck had not intended to occupy the land "*met de gevolgen die daaruit zijn voortgevloeid, zoals slavernij enz*" [with all the consequences that flowed from that, such as slavery and so on]. Culpability for the repercussions of this "*ontmoeting van landen*" [meeting of countries] lay with those who had succeeded Jan van Riebeeck, settled in southern Africa and introduced "*vreselijke armoede, ellende en onderdrukking*" [terrible poverty, misery and oppression].⁴

Forty years before Mayor Bloemendaal "*gegeten en geslapen*" [ate and slept] with "*de bevolking*" [the people], the town of Culemborg and its mayor, H A J M van Koningsbruggen, had no such qualms about their associations with the then Jan van Riebeeck.⁵ They participated with almost unbridled enthusiasm in a massive tercentenary festival, sponsored by D F Malan's government, to commemorate with "the people of South Africa" the "establishment of the White settlement at the Cape of Good Hope by Jan van Riebeeck three hundred years ago".⁶ The central stage of the festival was the streets and Atlantic shoreboard of Cape Town. Pageants depicting South Africa's past and present paraded down Adderley Street, a festival fair was constructed on Cape Town's reclaimed foreshore, where "the city

³Culemborg Courant, 5 November 1992.

⁴Culemborg Courant, 5 November 1992.

⁵Culemborg Courant, 5 November 1992.

⁶'Message from the Honourable the Prime Minister', *Official Programme of the Van Riebeeck Festival*, Cape Town (1952), p.7.

grew into the sea",⁷ and, in a scene reminiscent of the famous mid-nineteenth century painting by Charles Davidson Bell (a painting remarkable for its "blend of Dutch and English, with a touch of artistic licence thrown in")⁸, Jan van Riebeeck (Andre Huguenet) made the short journey from Table Bay to Granger Bay on board the Dromedaris, hoisted the flag and took possession of the land "in the name of the Dutch East India Company".⁹ A week later, from a replica of the Culemborg town hall at the festival fair, he phoned home:

Dit is Jan van Riebeeck hier, burger van u stad wat uit Culemborg in Kaapstad met u praat As die stigter van hierdie Suid-Afrikaanse volk wil ek graag my trots betuig op die prestasie van my nakomelinge. Hulle fees was 'n manjifieke skouspel. [This is Jan van Riebeeck here, a citizen of your town speaking to you from Culemborg in Cape Town. As the founder of this South African nation I want to express my pride at the achievement of my descendants. Their festival was a magnificent spectacle].¹⁰

Holland's response to Van Riebeeck was equally enthusiastic. The first of KLM's series of DC-6B aeroplanes was baptised Jan van Riebeeck at a ceremony at Schiphol airport involving an "*echte ossewa*" [genuine ox-wagon] and "*volksdansen*" [folk dances].¹¹ Culemborg sent the city of Cape Town a specially commissioned painting of the interior of the Barbara Church in Culemborg, where Van Riebeeck had been baptised, to adorn the mayor's parlour.¹² Between 10 May and 2 June 1952, Jan van Riebeeck commemorative events were held in Culemborg, although on a much scaled down version of the Cape Town celebrations. There were musical performances, sports tournaments and an historical exhibition, "*Jan van Riebeeck*

⁷'Report of Activities of the Mail Coach Organising Committee for the Van Riebeeck Festival', University of Stellenbosch, Thom Collection (hereafter US Thom), Box 49; *African Mirror*, no 605 (31 January 1951), National Film Archives (hereafter NFA), FA 2477.

⁸'Notes and News', *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, 6, 4 (June 1952), p.108; R van Luttervelt, 'Het uiterlijk van Jan van Riebeeck in de volksverbeelding', *Nederlandse Post*, 15 March 1952, pp.2-4.

⁹*Official Festival Programme*, p.87; 'Script for the Symbolic Landing of Van Riebeeck at Granger Bay, 5 April 1952', minutes, meeting of Pageant sub-committee of the Van Riebeeck Festival, 17 January 1952, University of Cape Town, African Studies Library, McMillan Local History Collection, Van Riebeeck Festival folders (hereafter McM VR).

¹⁰Telephonic conversation between Andre Huguenet and the mayor of Culemborg, 12 April 1952, South African Broadcasting Corporation Sound Archives (hereafter SABC), 18/92-93 (52).

¹¹*Nederlandse Post*, 15 June 1952; *Nederlandsch Zuid-Afrikaansche Vereeniging, Verslag over het jaar 1952*, p.7.

¹²Minute of the mayor of Cape Town for the year ended 5 September 1952, CA, 3/CT 1/7/1/49.

en zijn tijd" [Jan van Riebeeck and his times], in the town. Both the King and Queen of the Netherlands paid special visits to Culemborg, the latter being presented with a vase engraved with a depiction of the Dromedaris.¹³ At a gathering of Van Riebeeck's descendants, the South African ambassador unveiled a present from the Cape Town City Council to Culemborg, a statue of Van Riebeeck.¹⁴ Culemborg's leading men were "delighted with the gift", "impressed" with its appearance, and along with "[t]he inhabitants of South Africa", "proud of what this Hollander did at the Cape".¹⁵

These journeys, from Schiphol airport in Amsterdam to D F Malan, from Table Bay to Granger Bay, from Culemborg to Cape Town and back again, were passages through time and space, framed by a moment selected to signify origins of nationhood: the establishment of a revictualling station at Table Bay in April 1652 "to regularise the benefits which sailors [from Europe] had long derived from the Cape stopover".¹⁶ Embodying this moment was the official sent by the Dutch East India Company to set up the station, Jan van Riebeeck. Indeed, far from merely representing Dutch/South African relations, Jan van Riebeeck and 6 April 1652 have come to frame South Africa, its History and its future. This was no more evident than during South Africa's first "historic" elections in April 1994, when the "dawn of freedom" always evoked the 'setting of the sun' some 300 odd years before.¹⁷ It was expressed most

¹³*Nederlandse Post*, 15 June 1952.

¹⁴*Programma Jan van Riebeeck Herdenking Culemborg*, 10 May-2 June 1952.

¹⁵Minutes, meeting Cape Town City Council, 26 June 1952, noting letter from the Secretary, South African embassy Holland to the Council, 26 June 1952, CA, 3/CT 1/1/1/113; *South Africa's Heritage*, p.10. As the latter publication pointed out, one thing that this Hollander did do at the Cape was to arrange for the importation of slaves "from the west and east coast of Africa and from the East" (p.9). In her attempt to assist in establishing cordial relations between Holland and a 'new South Africa' in 1992, Mayor Bloemendaal seems conveniently to have overlooked this knowledge about the early importation of slaves to the Cape by the Dutch East India Company.

¹⁶R Elphick and V C Malherbe, 'The Khoisan to 1828' in R Elphick and H Giliomee (eds), *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840*, Cape Town (1989), p.10.

¹⁷SABC advertisement, *Cape Times*, 22 April 1994; ANC advertisement, *Cape Times*, 27 April 1994. The way that Van Riebeeck remains a central marker in South Africa's past can also clearly be seen in the *Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa: The Real Story*, Cape Town (1989), a book designed to challenge apartheid history. Here the "pre-white past" is presented in "'flashback' form" and "1652, the date of the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck, the first 'settler' remains pivotal to the text". See L Witz and C Hamilton, "Reaping the Whirlwind: The Reader's Digest *Illustrated History of South Africa* and Changing Popular Perceptions of History", *South African Historical Journal*, 24 (1991), p.199.

aply by one voter who, when asked for her feelings about "making history by standing in a queue" for hours, replied: "'Have you heard the real meaning of Einstein's Theory of Relativity? ... 'If you've waited 300 years for a vote, what's another five hours in the rain!'"¹⁸

But as much as South Africans and the rest of the world were constantly being reminded that History was being made in April 1994, history was being replaced by a teleological progression from a distinct starting point to an ending. In this 'endocentric' past, History now began, it was argued, when racial oppression started.¹⁹ "Ever since the first settlers from Europe appeared in South Africa in 1652, the country has been ruled by white people". It ended when "after nearly 350 years of white dominion" a "new South Africa" was born, "because the black people fought against" apartheid. In the intervening years, the government made "racist" laws to "keep whites in power ... [and] black people poor and without power". Most "black people" in turn, "did not like apartheid" and through resistance organisations, like the African National Congress (ANC) which "held up the sun" in the 300 year interregnum, they "made the white government change their mind". Out of this emerged the "new government" which "is going to stop apartheid and try to make the lives of our people better".²⁰

This story might appear somewhat crude and simplistic - no one would really argue that the refreshment station established at Table Bay in 1652 was a "country" named "South Africa" - but what it does point to is the way that Van Riebeeck's landing in its role as an icon of whiteness helps structure a framework of South African history built around repression and resistance. Here the task of the historian becomes to look for "coherent subjects" to fit into

¹⁸*Cape Times*, 28 April 1994.

¹⁹I have borrowed the term "endocentricity" from J Robinson, 'Apartheid Subjects and Post-Colonialism: Native Administration in Port Elizabeth, 1945-1970', unpublished conference paper, *Democracy: Popular Precedents, Practice, Culture*, History Workshop Conference, University of the Witwatersrand, 13-15 July 1994, p.4.

²⁰*Daily News Learn Supplement*, produced in association with the Sached Trust, 4 July 1994; *Time Magazine*, 23 May 1994; *Ulibambe Lingashone* [Hold Up the Sun] is a television series on the history of the ANC, produced by Afravision and directed by Laurence Dworkin (June 1993). Parts of it were originally shown on the pay-channel, M-Net, and later on SATV. Of course the ANC was only formed in 1912 (then called the South African Native National Congress) but it portrays itself as the bearer of the 'tradition of resistance' in South Africa.

this narrative, either as bearers of "the flag of liberation" or as proponents of "violence" and "domination".²¹ When these are not found, they have to be explained away in terms of 'complexity' or 'difference'. 1652 does not provide the only marking point for this narrative structure. Over the past twenty years South African revisionist historians have designated the 'mining revolution' in the second half of the nineteenth century as the moment that set "the pattern".²² In the words of one of the earliest revisionist historians, this pattern was one of "industrialisation and urbanisation, of proletarianisation and class formation, and of class conflict".²³ Although the "mechanistic rigidities" and the "essential functionalism" of this early formulation have since been substituted by more "complex and contradictory" analyses, the dominant narrative of the oppressive state and "resisting, oppressed individuals and groups" has remained intact.²⁴ But there is a major difference between this revisionist 'story' and that delineated by Van Riebeeck. The discovery and mining of diamonds and gold has cast South African history in terms of class formation, oppression and resistance, while the "disembarking of Van Riebeeck at the Cape"²⁵ has been the launching site of a 'story' of racial domination, subjugation and opposition. In terms of the latter account, it was racial oppression that came into being in April 1652 and which was discarded onto the garbage dump of History in the month of April 342 years later, when "Mandela lifted the hands of Deputy Presidents De Klerk and Mbeki skyward, like a referee proclaiming new title holders".²⁶

These twin processes, the marking of 1652 and the flattening out of South Africa's racial past around an originating moment and finite ending, owe more to the 1940s and '50s than the

²¹Robinson, 'Apartheid Subjects', p.7.

²²L Callinicos, *Gold and Workers, 1886 - 1924*, Johannesburg (1980), Introduction. I realise that this is what is described as a 'popular' work yet it did draw on the revisionist scholarship of the late 1970s and, to a large extent, characterises the essential elements of that work.

²³F A Johnstone, *Class, Race and Gold*, London (1976), p.3.

²⁴B Bozzoli and P Delius, 'Radical History and South African History' in J Brown et al (eds), *History from South Africa: Alternative Visions and Practices*, Philadelphia (1991), p.14; P Bonner, P Delius and D Posel, 'The Shaping of Apartheid: Contradiction, Continuity and Popular Struggle', in P Bonner et al (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis 1935-1962*, Johannesburg (1994), p.1; Robinson, 'Apartheid Subjects', p.6.

²⁵P Maylam, *A History of the African People of South Africa: from the Early Iron Age to the 1970s*, Cape Town (1986), p.2.

²⁶*Time Magazine*, 23 May 1994.

events which followed Van Riebeeck's landing. During "apartheid's genesis",²⁷ Van Riebeeck was not "invented ... from scratch", but was "shaped by contesting and conflicting versions of the past" to acquire a prominence and a substantially altered meaning.²⁸ In previous public pasts, Van Riebeeck had been, amongst others, a 'volksvader' [volk's father] of the Afrikaner nation, the founder of farming in South Africa and the bearer of Christianity to the sub-continent. Now in a "thoroughgoing system of racial engineering",²⁹ Van Riebeeck was recoded in the image of South Africa as the shaper of its past. He became the initiator of white domination both for those in power and those excluded from it.

This is not to argue that the early years of apartheid are to be treated merely as an explanatory context for casting Van Riebeeck and 1652 as the embodiment and moment of the founding of racial control in South Africa. Indeed, it is important to realise that "symbols, language, and ritual" are in themselves, crucial to the formation and transmission of social and political systems.³⁰ In the case of apartheid, recent writers have suggested that there was no "grand design" or "master plan" to put the system in place.³¹ Instead, its origins are said to lie in the uneven state responses to "the intensifying contradictions of industrialisation, urbanisation and popular struggles", many of which were both the source and result of fracturing within the ruling Nationalist party.³² What has not been recognised in this body of work is the way in which emblems of the past were crucial in developing a most "virulent form of racial

²⁷Bonner et al (eds), *Apartheid's Genesis*.

²⁸I am drawing here upon Carolyn Hamilton's critique of T Ranger and E Hobsbawn, *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge, Canto edition (1992)), C A Hamilton, 'Authoring Shaka: Models, Metaphors and Historiography', Unpublished PhD thesis, John Hopkins University (1993), p.66.

²⁹Bonner et al, 'The Shaping of Apartheid', p.1; See chapter one for an extensive account of when and where these previous images of Van Riebeeck surfaced.

³⁰L Hunt, 'Foreword' to M Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, Cambridge, Massachussets (1988), p.x.

³¹D Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise*, Oxford, (1991), pp.1-5; See also Bonner et al, 'The Shaping of Apartheid'.

³²Bonner et al, 'The Shaping of Apartheid', p.1. On the internal political machinations of the Nationalist Party see D O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994*, Johannesburg (1996).

ideology".³³ The 'venerable' Oom Paul Kruger of the Transvaal Republic, the 'tyrannical' Shaka Zulu, the 'villanous' Dingane, and the 'trusting' leader of the Great Trek, Piet Retief, all played their roles in laying the foundations of apartheid. But, amongst all the historical emblems, it was Van Riebeeck who, in the late 1940s and early '50s, "recast" South Africa's "time and space", who "labelled [the] grids into which entities would be placed" and thereby provided the basis for a "monstrously labyrinthine system" of racial control.³⁴

This might all seem rather far-fetched. All these men from the past had died long before apartheid was even thought of, and though, it might be argued, they were either its precursors or else were used as symbols to promote the ideology of apartheid, to associate them with its origins in the 1940s and '50s is a mere flight of fancy. Yet it is precisely because they became such central historical figures during "apartheid's genesis" that they shaped South Africa. They were not mere symbols that reflected some essential social and political reality, but were actual "instruments for transforming reality", for establishing "new fields of social, political and cultural struggle".³⁵ Van Riebeeck might have died some 300 years before apartheid even saw the light of day, and it is clear that he did not have ambitious plans for the settlement which developed around Table Bay, but he became in the 1950s the man who "*n beleid [teenoor die nie-blankes] neergele het wat vandag nog ... gevolg word*" [laid down the policy towards the non-whites that is still followed today], that is, apartheid.³⁶ Even forty years later, when proposals were being put forward by members of the ANC for the removal and/or destruction of his and other "*apartheid en koloniale simbole*" [apartheid and colonial symbols], they caused such a furore that sections of the press suggested that such acts might destroy South Africa's "fragile" government of national unity and "history".³⁷

³³Bonner et al, 'The Shaping of Apartheid', p.1.

³⁴Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*, p.1.; M L Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London (1992), p.30; Hunt, 'Foreword', p.x.

³⁵L Hunt, 'Introduction: History, Culture, and Text' in L Hunt (ed), *The New Cultural History*, Berkeley (1989), p.17.

³⁶*Die Transvaler se Van Riebeeck Bylaag*, 4 April 1952.

³⁷*Rapport*, 11 September 1994; *Weekend Argus*, 11 September 1994.

What this work seeks to do is to examine the text which sought to establish Van Riebeeck as a central figure in South Africa's public past: the government-sponsored tercentenary festival that was organised in 1952 to commemorate 300 years of his landing at Table Bay. Darnton has argued that in examining cultural texts, such as festivals, poems and jokes, the historian needs to "capture" the world of past others by "reading for meaning". By this he does not only refer to the need for detecting "alien system[s] of meaning" from the text alone but also through relating this reading to "the surrounding world of significance" by "moving forth between the narrative and the surrounding documentation". In this manner a way will be cleared "through a foreign mental world" and the "social dimension of meaning" delineated.³⁸ He argues that this will be an open-ended interpretation, in that participants and observers do not all extract the same meaning from an event, or even all its meaning, but it will necessarily draw upon "fixed patterns of behaviour".³⁹ As critics of Darnton have pointed out, this reading for meaning, although it does take into account some degree of conflicting interpretation and sub-texts, is ultimately always searching for an essential understanding of events through the eyes of the participants, attempting to "map ... with some precision ... an established range of meanings".⁴⁰ The result of this is that once the meanings have been found, defined and limited, the contradictions and possibly differing meanings tend to be hidden and a new veil is drawn over the text. As Hunt has argued, "[t]he urge to see order and meaning obscures the existence of conflict and struggle".⁴¹ Indeed, the significance of symbols lies in their instability and mobility. "They are not always easily decipherable and not always well deciphered".⁴² This is particularly the case with festivals. At one level it seems that festivals are rich in symbolic meaning, usually emphasising "consensus and oneness rather than distinction within the community",⁴³ with "members of a whole community ... sharing a world

³⁸R Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, Harmondsworth (1991), pp.12-14; R Darnton, 'The Symbolic Element in History', *Journal of Modern History*, 58, 1 (1986), p.228.

³⁹R Darnton, 'The Symbolic', p.231.

⁴⁰Darnton, 'The Symbolic', p.231.

⁴¹Hunt, 'History, Culture, and Text', pp.12-13.

⁴²R Chartier, 'Texts, Symbols and Frenchness', *The Journal of Modern History*, 57, 4 (December 1985), p.689.

⁴³Hunt, 'Foreword', p.xi.

view" gathered in celebration of a particular event, day or individual.⁴⁴ Yet it is precisely this richness of symbolism and apparent unity that makes it so difficult to read a festival for meaning. Festivals are moments when struggles over symbolism become increasingly evident, when the signs become ambiguous and contests emerge over their adaptation, adoption and/or rejection.⁴⁵ There are conflicts over involvement and intention, over organisation and spontaneity, over design and response and over participation and exclusion. To search for a unified meaning in these multiple confrontations would presuppose some "shared and unified symbolic universe" and would efface the conflicts which went into constructing this "coherence" and "interdependence".⁴⁶ Instead of merely embarking on an expedition to unravel some underlying signification of the tercentenary festival, this work will take the reader on a journey to try and determine some of the intentions and strategies in the planning for '52 but, at the same time, will constantly be on the lookout for the disjunctures and faultlines that went into the making of Van Riebeeck.

This journey begins at the re-creation of the event which was intended to frame the festival: the moment of colonial settlement or European founding. The power of this moment lies in its seemingly natural occurrence which merely has to be recovered and inserted into the time of the festival. The past of the festival is then constructed around this 'natural' event. Yet, as was noted in the Australian bicentennial in 1988, the "decision had to be made that two hundred years since the arrival of the First Fleet was an event worth celebrating, and then the event itself had to be invented".⁴⁷ In this 'founding' it was the beginnings of settlement, marked by the arrival of Captain Arthur Phillip with a group of convicts, merchant seamen, marines and their families at Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788, rather than the 'discovery' of the east coast of Australia at Botany Bay by Captain Cook in 1770, which took the stage

⁴⁴A Falassi, 'Festival: Definition and Morphology', in A Falassi (ed), *Time Out Of Time: Essays on the Festival*, Albuquerque (1987), p.2.

⁴⁵I am drawing rather liberally here on Patrick Harries' review article 'Histories New and Old', *South African Historical Journal* 30 (May 1994), p.128, in order to make this point about festivals.

⁴⁶Chartier, 'Text, Symbols', p.690.

⁴⁷P Cochrane and D Goodman, 'The Great Australian Journey: Cultural Logic and Nationalism In The Postmodern Era', *Australian Historical Studies*, 23, 91 (October 1988), p.24.

as the 'beginning of nationhood'.⁴⁸ Cook, the somewhat ambiguous figure of singular 'discovery' was "cast off" to be replaced by Phillip who, in 1788, marched "out of Myth into History", marking places, creating a "substantial history" of settlement and emptying Botany Bay of a future.⁴⁹

For the United States it is Christopher Columbus, the sailor from Genoa, who made landfall at an as yet undisclosed island in the Bahamas on 12 October 1492, who is celebrated annually as the 'discoverer of America', the herald of "a new age" and even the initiator of "The Modern Era [when] Man emerg[ed] from the Middle Ages".⁵⁰ In so doing he supplants perhaps rather more 'obvious' candidates such as Leif Erikson, the Swede who occupied Newfoundland from about 1000 or Amerigo Vespucci who is presumed to have 'discovered' mainland America in 1497. And in South Africa in 1652 it was the Dutch commander of a revictualling station at the Cape, Jan van Riebeeck, who upstaged both the Portuguese, who, from Bartholomew Dias' voyage in 1488, had come to regard "South Africa ... as a province of the little kingdom of Portugal" and the British, whose moment of landing in Muizenberg in 1795 was long regarded by "educated men" as the beginning of "noteworthy" South African history.⁵¹

These alternative moments of discovery, occupation or settlement are not meant either as a corrective or a replacement for the 'obvious' date. What they do is point out how, from the beginning, the start of a 'nation's journey' is always open to contestation. Yet, at the same time that beginning cannot merely be plucked from mid-air in order to suit some predetermined political purpose and "the event itself ... invented".⁵² Indeed, it is the history of that specific moment of origin which enables it to be shaped and transformed. For instance,

⁴⁸G Souter, 'Skeleton at the Feast', in B Gammage and P Spearritt, *Australians 1938*, Sydney (1987), p.14; E Newby, *The World Atlas of Exploration*, London (1975), pp.126, 218.

⁴⁹P Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History*, Chicago (1989), pp.34-5.

⁵⁰U Eco, *Misreadings*, London (1994), p.136.

⁵¹S R Welch, *Europe's Discovery of South Africa*, Cape Town (1953), p.1.

⁵²Cochrane and Goodman, 'The Great Australian Journey', p.24.

in Australia, specifying the moment of settlement in 1988 was largely a formality. Cook had had a long and undistinguished career in Australian public history well before 1988, his apparent lack of enthusiasm, displayed by his inaccurate descriptions of the Australian coast line and the fact that he never came back, being regarded as damning evidence that he was not the founder.⁵³ So, despite some opposition from South Australia where it was argued that Phillip's landing was merely the founding of New South Wales rather than Australia, since the beginning of the twentieth century 26 January was celebrated, albeit somewhat intermittently, as Australia Day, Anniversary Day or Foundation Day in various Australian states.⁵⁴ In 1938 the central event of the 150th anniversary celebrations of white settlement in Australia was the staging of Phillip's landing at Farm Cove (Sydney Cove was too small a venue to accommodate the spectators) to be met by a "'troupe of aborigines'".⁵⁵ By 1988 within a "new paradigm of national representation", the emphasis was now being placed upon an Australian nation being composed of many people, all of whom had journeyed to Australia over *thousands* of years. A flotilla of Tall Ships was used as a symbol of multiculturalism alongside a re-production of the arrival of the Phillip's First Fleet representing the "Australian heritage".⁵⁶

A similar process has occurred with Christopher Columbus over the past five centuries. In the United States, where Columbus never set foot, Columbus Day has become an official public holiday, the centennials of his landing have turned into massive extravaganzas and he has more places named after him than any other figure except George Washington. This explosion of Columbiana in the United States is largely associated with a shifting image of Columbus. Initially a barely commemorated symbol of exploration and heroism in the 17th century, from the inception of the United States in the late 18th century he became the personification of an essential patriotism of the 'new nation' in a 'new world', an image he still largely retains today in spite of also becoming a human object of rational study in the 'scientific' world of

⁵³Carter, *Botany Bay*, pp.1-2.

⁵⁴K S Inglis, 'Australia Day', *Australian Historical Studies*, 13, 49 (October 1967) pp.20-41.

⁵⁵Souter, 'Skeleton at the feast', p.14.

⁵⁶P Spearritt, 'Celebration of a Nation: The Triumph of Spectacle', *Australian Historical Studies*, 15, 1 (October 1988), pp.8-15.

the twentieth century.⁵⁷ The Columbus quinqucentennial in 1992, although it was not confined to the United States, drew together selected elements of these public pasts to commemorate (rather than celebrate) Columbus in different and contradictory ways. He was, in 1992, the initiator of the "first encounters between the Old and New Worlds", the man who "linked two old worlds ... and made one", the subject of extensive and "accurate" "historical and archaeological research" of "those earliest encounters" between Europeans and Native Americans and the instigator of the "process that eventually produced the United States of America", a country claimed, with somewhat exaggerated patriotic fervour, to be "a symbol and a haven of individual liberty for people throughout the world".⁵⁸

While the previous public pasts helped shape the form which these commemorations have taken, they have gained their authority by drawing upon documents narrating the first moments of founding and the subsequent events. These documents appear as original sources and enable a veracity that those accounts considered as 'second-hand' would not be able to sustain. This follows a distinction which many historians make between primary and secondary evidence, with the latter appearing only to have a superficial quality, and the former presenting a deeper essence. Thus, if, as an historian,

... you use the word 'source' instead of 'trace'; if you refer to some of these sources as primary and if you sometimes replace primary by original (original and thus underlying/fundamental source), this suggests that if you go to the originals, then because the originals seem genuine (as opposed to secondary/second-hand traces), genuine (true/deep) knowledge can be gained.⁵⁹

The journal of Christopher Columbus, which relates his travels, at times on a daily basis, is one of the clearest examples of such a "'beginning text'".⁶⁰ Although the original of the diary

⁵⁷This outline of the development of the image of Columbus draws heavily upon K Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Colombian Legacy*, London (1991), ch.13.

⁵⁸'First Encounters: Spanish Explorations in the Caribbean and the United States', pamphlet for a travelling exhibit from the Florida Museum of Natural History, Miami (1992); *Newsweek*, Columbus Special Issue, Fall/Winter 1991; *Time*, 7 October 1991.

⁵⁹K Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History*, London (1991), p.47.

⁶⁰Peter Hulme uses this term to indicate the way that certain words entered the English language for the first time via Columbus' journal. I am borrowing it rather freely to adapt to an examination of festivals of first settlement/discovery/encounter and their historical authentication. P Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797*, London (1992) p.17.

was lost in the mid-sixteenth century (the only version we have is a summarised copy made by a Dominican priest), and the accuracy and authorship of some of its entries challenged, the journal remains the primary document of founding. Its time frames, descriptions and motivations are a key to any future histories and the reconstruction of the moment of founding. It enables 1992 to claim 500 years with 'accuracy', provides 'primary' evidence of the 'first encounter' and sustains an historical authenticity for 'the true' Christopher Columbus.

Although Ciraj Rassool and I previously claimed that prior to the 1940s "Van Riebeeck and 6 April had very little place in public history" and that "in respect of Van Riebeeck there was almost total '*vergetelheid*' [amnesia]",⁶¹ his landing at Granger Bay in April 1952, like that of Columbus in the United States in 1992 and Phillip in Sydney in 1988, was only made possible by both the public and the 'historical' pasts. The first chapter of this work attempts to plot some of these histories of the framing moment, examining the representations of the 'man' and his landing, and how they were located within different 'South African' histories before 1952. This part of the journey offers a package tour of the Van Riebeeck experience over 300 years, from the moment of landing, through the unveiling of his statue in Adderley Street, Cape Town, in 1899, to the start of the celebrations of the hundredth anniversary of the Great Trek in 1938 at the base of his statue. The focus will be on three selected histories: the April commemorations of founding, school history text books and the diary of Jan van Riebeeck. It was from these pasts and their sometimes differing meanings that the organisers of the 1952 festival were able to select, highlight and discard in order to ensure that Van Riebeeck and his crew landed safely at Granger Bay.

But once the founder had landed, discovered and made the first settlement, what was he to do with the country? This is the central question which concerned the organisers of festivals of founding as they planned their respective celebrations. In one sense it seems that the answer was very simple. All they had to do was to "renovate celebratory narratives of

⁶¹C Rassool and L Witz, 'The 1952 Jan van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival: Constructing and Contesting Public National History in South Africa', *Journal of African History*, 34 (1993), p.451.

European superiority".⁶² "'Australia's March to Nationhood'" in 1938, for instance, was a story about the 'progress' of a land from the 'backwardness' of the 'aboriginal' state, a progression initiated by Phillip who planted "'a fresh sprig of empire in this new and vast land.'" He was followed by the Europeans who crossed the Blue Mountains, discovered gold, developed industry, 'conquered' the arts and brought into being the 'Commonwealth of Australia'.⁶³ Although by 1988 aboriginal inhabitants were being cast in a multicultural mosaic of Australians who had journeyed together, Phillip was still telling a European tale of "Discovery, Settlement, Convicts, Free Settlers [and] Gold".⁶⁴ When Columbus set sail in 1992 he also evoked images of European progression across a continent, always leading towards a modern nation. Although no longer considered to be the discoverer of America, his landing begins the story of the "pioneer spirit" of the United States and the start of its 'real' "recorded history".⁶⁵ It is a story of

the literal progress across the land, across the mountains and rivers, as far as one could go, as well as the material progress that turned the howling wilderness into productive cropland and range, prosperous hamlet and city, and the moral progress that brought the laws and customs of civilization to the shores and then to the hinterlands, to white and (should they submit) red alike - all leading to the political progress that pointed towards resistance, revolution, and independence⁶⁶

Once independence had been gained, and the mountains and prairies crossed (with the many other Columbuses joining in the pioneering enterprise), democracy, liberty, progress and History flowed seemingly naturally until Columbus was able to assert himself, in 1992, with the help of the US army, as the guardian of "the new frontiers of democracy across the world".⁶⁷

⁶²Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.xi.

⁶³Souter, 'Skeleton', pp.16-19; J Thomas, '1938: Past and Present in an Elaborate Anniversary', *Australian Historical Studies*, 23, 91 (1988), pp.78-9.

⁶⁴C Healy, 'History, History Everywhere But ...', *Australian Historical Studies*, 23, 91 (1988), p.184.

⁶⁵B Ransby, 'Columbus and the Making of Historical Myth', *Race and Class*, 33, 3 (1992), p.83; H Davies, 'Don't Spoil the Birthday Party with Modern Value Judgement', *Independent on Sunday*, 14 July 1991.

⁶⁶Sale, *Conquest of Paradise*, p.333.

⁶⁷N Murray, 'Columbus and the USA: from Mythology to Ideology', *Race and Class*, 33, 3 (1992), p.50; Ransby, 'Columbus historical myth', p.83.

A similar story of 'progress' could be told about Jan van Riebeeck in 1952, about South Africa emerging from the "Dark and Unknown", being set free by the spirit of the European discovery and settlement, and developing into a modern, industrialised nation.⁶⁸ Yet, what this story, and the ones relating to Columbus and Phillip, tend to do is to take an end product and assume a straight causal line between organisers' intentions, images displayed and meanings projected. In so doing they fail to answer probably the most obvious question as to which celebratory European narratives and their components are selected as appropriate by the festival organisers to renovate and elaborate upon. This, of course, does relate to the selection of the moment of founding, but that moment, which may set a direction for the narrative, does not necessarily provide its contents. This was evident in the Australian bicentennial celebrations in 1988, when, although 1988 was not an issue among the organisers, the content of the programme was heavily disputed. More conservative elements wanted a past that emphasised 'tradition', the "Australian Achievement", the "British heritage", "the family" and "relative social harmony". Opposing elements argued for depictions of Australia as a multicultural nation, with a significant contribution from the Aborigines. It was a nation composed of people "living together", with their own religions, cultures and "historic sites". Following great bitterness, many battles and resignations from committees what emerged was a negotiated past. In this 'new nation' the arrival of the First Fleet remained central, although, in tune with the paradigm shift, its entry into Sydney harbour in January 1988 had to compete with a flotilla of Tall Ships, a fireworks display and a reception from Prince Charles and Lady Diana. Captain Phillip was also recoded in a travelling exhibition in juxtaposition with an Aboriginal canoe as Australia presented itself as preparing to embark upon a voyage "as a nation into the future".⁶⁹

The organisers of the Van Riebeeck festival in 1952 also had to contend with heavily disputed pasts. In their attempts to give content, meaning and shape to a South African past which Van Riebeeck had created, there was no single "European" narrative which could be easily drawn upon. There was the story of the 'struggle of the Afrikaner' against the rule of the Dutch East

⁶⁸*Official Festival Programme*, pp.99-123.

⁶⁹Cochrane and Goodman, 'The Great Australian Journey', pp.21, 23, 26; Spearritt, 'Celebration of a nation', pp.15-16.

India Company and British imperialism, highlighting the Great Trek, the Anglo-Boer War and Paul Kruger, who stood up against the might of the British Empire. The narrative of gold and diamonds told of struggles against anti-capitalist forces to build an industrial South Africa, typified by the 'achievements' of Cecil John Rhodes who wanted to build an imperial road from Cape to Cairo. Often linked to this was the 'British achievement', the introduction of 'civilised' values to Africa, which emerged triumphant particularly against the 'kaffir hordes' on the eastern frontier. At times all these different histories were complementary, but equally, they stood in contradistinction to each other. Was Rhodes, for instance, the villain of the Jameson Raid, which tried to topple the government of Paul Kruger, or was he the builder of the South African economy? Were missionaries bearers of 'civilisation' or obstacles to the expansion of effective settlement? It was with these sort of conflicts that the organisers had to battle as they sought to reduce South Africa's space to a stage, where time unfolded with a logic of its own and where history was recast as History, an impersonal force which was "the playwright, co-ordinating facts into a coherent sequence".⁷⁰

These conflicts existed not only within European historical narratives, but also within oppositional or counter-histories. I will speak about these counter-histories in more detail later on, but what is notable is that the 'European narrative' was always, more often than not implicitly, produced in conversation with manifestly antagonistic versions of history. This is perhaps more obvious in the more recent festivals of founding where the criticism of the Eurocentric nature of the proceedings has led to alterations in conceptions of founding. In Australia, as referred to earlier, it led to the creation of "multiple journeys", while in the United States the voyage of Christopher Columbus in 1992 was not considered in the "multicultural, interdependent, ultrasensitive modern world" as the discovery of America but the collision of two worlds which transformed both the east and the west.⁷¹ Although Van Riebeeck had little time for such sensitivities in 1952, the story of his country also spoke to adversarial pasts in seemingly less apparent ways. There were groups who were boycotting the celebrations and producing counter-histories, students who were refusing to participate because the planned festivities "showed a strong racial bias" and "a perversion of the true

⁷⁰Carter, *Botany Bay*, p.xiv.

⁷¹*Newsweek* Columbus Special Issue, Fall/Winter, 1991.

historical facts",⁷² and some individuals who appeared before the historical committees of the festival on behalf of 'black history'. At a superficial level it seems that little notice was taken of these representations by the official organisers. Yet it was these sometimes silent conversations that almost inversely structured the narrative of apartheid into a system that was proclaimed by its promoters to be without race through the assertion that Van Riebeeck "Never Saw the Bantu" - in these terms there were only separate ethnic nations or proto nations - and, simultaneously, a form of racism which institutionalised white domination.⁷³ In this quite unexpected way the adversarial past altered the form, content and timing of the "'traditional' narrative of European imperial expansion", bringing into question the very existence of a pure, untainted, European "celebratory narrative".⁷⁴

Giving Van Riebeeck a country with a history did not only require negotiating events of the past, but also ensuring that the content of these events fitted the form of the festival. Two aspects are of concern here. The first is that the events portrayed had to maintain a steady balance between evoking spontaneous reactions and keeping a semblance of order. What the organisers of the festivals of founding did not want was the carnivalesque nature of the popular festivals between the 16th and 18th century in Europe with their tumultuous scenes, confrontations through "theatrical and ritual gestures", "crowds obstructing the streets and public squares", and popular enthusiasm reaching fever pitch.⁷⁵ Such excitement could not be tolerated as it "disconcerted or 'offended' reason" and could even lead to disunity. Order had to be continually asserted, public participation limited and fantasy regulated in order to ensure

⁷²*Eastern Province Herald*, 11 August 1951; *Daily Dispatch*, 11 August 1951; *Queenstown Daily Representative*, 11 August 1951; *The Star*, 10 August 1951.

⁷³*South Africa's Heritage*, p.56. Mahmood Mamdani ('Reconciliation Without Justice', *Southern African Review of Books*, (November/December 1996), p.4) refers to this as the "dual identity" of apartheid, "racial solidarity amongst its beneficiaries, and an ethnic particularism amongst its victims". For how this was articulated in the Van Riebeeck festival see chapters two and four of this thesis.

⁷⁴T Meade and M Hunt, 'Editors Introduction' to special Columbus issue *Radical History Review*, 53 (Spring 1992), p.3: Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.xi.

⁷⁵E Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival: A People's Uprising at Romans 1579-1580*, London (1979), p.xx; Ozouf, *Festivals*, pp.3-4, 10.

that the selected "propitious ... times, and [the] 'good' events" in the building of Van Riebeeck's nation could "ripen just like good fruit".⁷⁶

The second formative aspect that the historical content of the Van Riebeeck festival had to be concerned with was the issue of weighing up spectacle and authenticity. While many commemorative festivals tend to emphasise ritual, speeches, and a re-affirmation of an apparent inner essence, it is the visual experience that is central to festivals of founding. There are elaborate historical journeys over sea and land, displays of pageantry in the streets, fairs and historical displays to gaze upon and lavishly illustrated histories for schools and the general public. But this emphasis on the spectacle is always in contest with striving to achieve 'historical authenticity' and festival organisers can use either to motivate for the exclusion or inclusion of 'historical events'. Thus, in 1938 in an attempt to deny a convict past for Australia, their arrival received very little prominence in pageantry because it was claimed that "convicts were kept in the background in Phillip's time, and it would therefore be historically accurate to keep them in the background".⁷⁷ Similarly, events on which there was very little information, but which were considered central to the visual spectacle, had to be magnified. There is no record, for instance, of Phillip making a speech when he landed at Sydney Cove in 1788, but for the purposes of the 1938 landing at Farm Cove one was made up which, almost literally, invited the crowd "to observe themselves from his perspective".⁷⁸ Important 'national' events were therefore constituted by their ability to be made visually attractive.

When Van Riebeeck discovered South Africa in 1952, the country and its public past with which he was presented with had been established through an elaborate series of negotiations. There had been bargaining and arbitration over the differing European narratives, between oppositional and European narratives, between order and spontaneity and between authenticity and spectacle. The second part of the journey in this work is through these multiple transactions, starting off at the pageant which was meant to begin the past, but which was almost the end point of the festival, the re-creation of Van Riebeeck's landing on Saturday

⁷⁶Ozouf, *Festivals*, pp.3-4,10.

⁷⁷Thomas, '1938: Past and Present', p.82.

⁷⁸Thomas, '1938: Past and Present', pp.83-4.

5 April 1952. This work then moves backwards (or forwards) to examine how differing pasts were accommodated, selected and accorded place, form and meaning in a continually re-constituted 'national' past. These historical compositions took on a variety of forms: movies, theatre, dance, radio broadcasts, published illustrated histories and street pageants. As in the earlier part of the journey, it will not be possible to take in all these 'momentous' pasts and the processes of their production. The focus will be on the pageantry in the streets of Cape Town and the festival stadium on the foreshore between 2 and 4 April 1952: the historical procession, the Malay and Griqua pageants and the *volkspele* [national/folk dances/games]. Although in some instances these moving processions of the past were not entirely representative of the broad range of official historical productions, for the sake of spectacle they stripped history down to its bare essentials and laid down the broad outlines of how the distinctive episodes were to be cobbled together into national past/s. In this sense the vehicles which carried the participants aboard the floats into the past, also transported the building blocks of a negotiated historical edifice for Jan van Riebeeck to receive on the sands of Granger Bay.

Coinciding with these conflicts and negotiations over the accuracy of images, the suitability of metaphors and "symbolic authority in representing the past"⁷⁹ of Jan van Riebeeck, there were political groupings in South Africa who were challenging the very basis of the festival, its celebration of 'white' founding. The most sustained and vocal of these anti-celebratory campaigns came from the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), a broad front of political organisations campaigning against racial domination through boycotts and non-collaboration. They called for a massive boycott of the Van Riebeeck festival, labelling it a "festival of hate", an "orgy of *Herrenvolkism*" and a celebration of "the national oppression and exploitation of the Non-Whites".⁸⁰ The ANC, although it did not primarily direct its attentions towards Van Riebeeck, very deliberately chose 6 April, the day of his landing, to publically launch its campaign of defiance against the 'unjust laws' of apartheid: the Pass Laws, Stock limitation, the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and the Voters Act of 1951. In mass meetings across the

⁷⁹Cochrane and Goodman, 'The Great Australian Journey', p.25.

⁸⁰*The Torch*, 8 January 1952, 13 and 24 December 1951, 29 January 1952, respectively.

country on 6 April 1952, speakers referred to the Van Riebeeck festival as mere "gilded hypocrisy and distorted history".⁸¹

These anti-celebratory movements in 1952 resonate with similar campaigns during celebrations of founding both before and after the Van Riebeeck festival. In Australia, 26 January 1938 was declared a Day of Mourning and Protest by various Aboriginal organisations. At a conference of representatives of these organisations in Sydney, on the day of the "150th anniversary of the Whiteman's seizure" of the country, speakers asserted that the Aborigines had "no reason to rejoice on Australia's 150th birthday". 150 years ago the land belonged to their forefathers, but now they were being "pushed further and further into the background". A resolution was passed unanimously protesting "against the callous treatment of our people by the whiteman during the past 150 years" and appealing to "the Australian nation of today to make new laws for the education and care of the Aborigines".⁸² Fifty years later, the bicentenary provided the focal point for "Treaty 88", a campaign for, among other things, a treaty between the Aborigines and the Australian Government, protection of Aboriginal sacred sites and the "international recognition of Aborigines as a *people*". One of the key moments in this campaign was a direct inversion of the moment of colonial founding, when an Aboriginal person landed at Dover Beach in England on the very day that the flotilla of Tall Ships and the First Fleet sailed into Sydney Harbour.⁸³

Not to be outdone, the Columbus quincentennial saw the amount of opposition to celebrating or commemorating the festival of founding reach unprecedented levels throughout the world. In the USA the National Council of Churches called for the quincentenary to be a time "for penitence rather than jubilation".⁸⁴ The 1992 alliance, a coalition of Native American groups, coordinated by Suzan Harjo, saw no reason to celebrate "murder, pillage, rape, destruction of the major waterways, destruction of the land, the destruction and pollution of the air", all of

⁸¹*Cape Times*, 7 April 1952; *The Guardian*, 10 April 1952.

⁸²Speeches and resolution quoted in J Horner and M Langton, 'The Day of Mourning' in Gammage and Spearritt (eds), *Australia 1938*, pp.29-30.

⁸³'Treaty 88 Campaign: Aims and Objectives', *Australian Historical Studies*, 23, 91 (1988), pp.1-2.

⁸⁴*Time*, 26 November 1992.

which, they maintained, had been initiated by European westward expansion.⁸⁵ They therefore organised their own events for the quincentennial. These included a campaign for land and treaty rights, an hour of silent mourning on 12 October 1992, spattering Columbus statues with blood, putting Columbus on trial and hanging effigies of his likeness.⁸⁶ In Guatemala, the Second Continental Gathering of the 500 Years Campaign of Indigenous and Popular Resistance announced that commemorating Columbus would be tantamount to a celebration of "ethnocide and genocide, which cost ... ninety million victims alone during the conquest and the colonization".⁸⁷ The Caribbean Organization of Indigenous People not only objected to the celebrations in very strong terms but claimed them as a celebration of victory, for despite the arrival of Columbus "the fact that indigenous people still survive today is a tribute to their resistance".⁸⁸ In Britain, the playwright Harold Pinter set up a "500 Years of Resistance" group to support those who were resisting Columbus across America.⁸⁹ As part of an attempt to broaden the anti-Columbus campaign even further afield, Antonio Gomez, the information director of the Indian Treaty Council in San Francisco, attended the congress of the ANC in South Africa in July 1991, explaining to delegates how 1492 "really represents the start of the process which led to the slave trade" between Africa and America. His message was well received and the President of the ANC, Nelson Mandela, promised to join in the protest as replicas of Columbus' ships sailed into San Francisco.⁹⁰ The result of these campaigns was that when October 1992 came around, the Columbus commemorations had, despite US government support, largely fizzled out and low profile activities were the order of the day.

⁸⁵Interview with Suzan Shown Harjo, *Rethinking Schools* Special Edition, Rethinking Columbus, Milwaukee (September 1991), p.4.

⁸⁶*Newsweek*, 24 June 1991; *Newsweek* Special Columbus Issue, Fall/Winter 1991.

⁸⁷Quoted in T Meade and M Hunt, 'Editors' Introduction', *Radical History Review*, 53 (Spring 1992), p.1.

⁸⁸*Latinamerica Press*, 23, 38, 17 October 1991.

⁸⁹"Why Harold hates Christopher", *Central America Report*, Autumn 1991; D Lister, 'Why Harold hates Christopher', *Independent on Sunday*, 14 July 1991.

⁹⁰D Gregory, 'A Red Light Day for Columbus', *History Today*, 41 (December 1991), pp.5-6. Due to a heavy schedule the following year and the scaling down of the Columbus festival, Mandela did not fulfill this promise.

The counter-histories which emerge in the festival of founding tend to build their narratives around two components: preconquest societies and the impact of western (or eastern) expansion. The date of founding becomes the marking point of this narrative, recast as the onset of conquest. All that had happened before this founding/conquest in 'indigenous' societies is then cast in an environment friendly, 'mother earth', classless aura, while after conquest/founding, the earth is destroyed, corruption occurs, societies become ridden with structural inequalities and either collapse or are destroyed. "The Untold Story" which teachers were encouraged to recite and illustrate to young children in schools in the USA in 1992, started off in pre-conquest times:

Once upon a time a group of people lived on an island, Bohio (now called Hispaniola) in the Caribbean. These people, whom I consider my people, were proud of their island. They built beautiful farms and villages from dirt and rock. They respected the plants and animals. Many people lived on Bohio. They called themselves Tainos.⁹¹

Then three boats appeared "far off in the ocean" and things began to change.⁹² There was a massive outflow of gold and capital from America to Europe, "plague and pestilence" began to pervade the American continent, poverty and tyranny became the order of the day, the environment, which the "native people" had so loved and protected, was destroyed and slavery, with its legacy of racism which "still haunts America", was introduced. Yet this was not entirely a story of gloom and inevitable destruction. The light at the end of the tunnel in the anti-celebratory narrative was the resistance of "Native Americans", who were, in the face of Columbus, asserting "their culture and traditions", establishing a unified front, exposing "the hidden history of colonialism" and building a new world "based on justice".⁹³

As the official festival programmes have been seen as "renovating European celebratory narratives", so these anti-celebratory campaigns have been cast as being in stark contrast to the official versions, asserting "a counterhistory", revindicating "lifeways", and consolidating

⁹¹T Thomas, 'The Untold Story', *Rethinking Schools* Special Edition, p.32. Once again, this is a very simplistic and crude depiction in a popular history written explicitly for school children, but I would argue that it reflects the essential elements of the pre-conquest narrative that appears in anti-celebratory histories, such as Kirkpatrick Sale's *The Conquest of Paradise*.

⁹²Thomas, 'The Untold Story', p.32.

⁹³'Columbus 500 - The Facts', *New Internationalist*, 226 (December 1991), pp.18-19.

"struggles for territory and autonomy".⁹⁴ But to read off these anti-celebratory narratives as direct descendants of struggles against European domination is merely to invert the process of reading the "official version" by easily slipping the production of the past into a framework of repression and resistance. Once again, the ways that apparently conflicting pasts engage and interact with each other are ignored. The date of founding/conquest in America, for instance, is ironically the beginning of history for both pasts. For those in favour of celebrating Columbus, it is the beginning of history in terms of the start of the written record as opposed to the archaeological, whereas for the opposition it is the date when almost ahistorical indigenous 'lifeways' change as 'historic events' start to occur. Moreover, it is the narrative of the founder figure which remains the pivot of the story. The counter-histories may "distort, twist, or invert" his image, but, like a mirror they still "reflect the original image" and "the original text". The essentials of the story thus remain very similar, and, more often than not, they affirm the existence of a 'national past' around the moment of founding and conquest.⁹⁵

The third part of the journey takes us to the counter-histories that were produced around the Van Riebeeck festival. Unlike the public pageantry and visual tone characterising the official festival, it was the written and spoken word which dominated the opposition to the festival. It was through newspapers, variously titled as being part of 'resistance' or 'alternative' press, that these campaigns were explained and propagated. In public meetings attempts were made to draw upon a broader, more visible support base, which in turn could provide 'news' for the press. Finally, there were books based upon extensive research that presented different versions of the past, from which the opposition attempted to gain its 'historical authenticity'. It is these three forms of the counter-histories - the press, public meetings and histories - which will be examined, in terms of their organisation, structure, dispersion and regathering of

⁹⁴Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.xi.

⁹⁵H Davies, 'Don't Spoil the Birthday Party ...', *Independent on Sunday*, 14 July 1991; P Seed, 'On Caribbean Shores: Problems of Writing History of the First Contact', *Radical History Review*, 53 (1992), p.10; M Aveling, 'Not the Bicentennial History', *Australian Historical Studies*, 23, 91 (1988), p.162. A similar point about the interaction between 'indigenous' and 'imported' narratives is made by Isabel Hofmeyr in her study of oral historical narrative in a chiefdom in the Northern Transvaal. She argues that the "two traditions of chief and settler were by no means separate entities and they influenced each other in significant ways so that a neat distinction between chiefly /oral and settler/written is not possible", I Hofmeyr, *We Spend Our Years As a Tale That Is Told: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom*, Johannesburg (1993), p.14.

the past into a "ritual of revival" - its "DissemiNation".⁹⁶ What will be of concern is not to try and locate these forms within the discourse of repression and resistance, but to look at the processes of their production in their interaction with the negotiated narrative of 'the nation' emerging from organisers of the festival, almost simultaneously invoking and obliterating its "totalising boundaries".⁹⁷

Not only was there a great deal of opposition to the festivals of hate/conquest/founding and counter-histories produced, but the very nature of a 'public' festival left a space open, for those who participated, to ascribe different meanings to the exhibitions and events. Ozouf argues that in the case of "deliberately engineered festivals", this space is limited as the excessive power of those involved in the organisation, through funding, authority and access to the media, always means that the signification they give to the festival triumphs "over the meaning experienced by the participants". Yet, at the same time, using Freund, she points out that what makes a festival a success is that it is able to generate "festive excitement". This "excitement", however, cannot emerge from spectators and participants merely succumbing to the 'official version', but from "the transgression of prohibitions, from the excess authorized by the festival."⁹⁸ In an almost contradictory way it is these 'unofficial' encounters and violations of the festival programme that evoke the spontaneity that the organisers so desperately seek. The festival, no matter how much it is engineered or organised to 'perfection', is thus an open forum, a place where everyone can derive "knowledge and skill" through "pleasurable, sensual experiences",⁹⁹ and therefore always has the ability to generate festive excesses and differing renditions.

According to Spearritt, this was no more evident than in the Australian bicentenary celebrations of 1988 when it was the spectacle of the occasion which triumphed over the "'celebration of a nation'". The crowds lining Sydney harbour on 26 January did not, by and

⁹⁶H K Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in H K Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, London (1990), p.291.

⁹⁷Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', p.300.

⁹⁸Ozouf, *Festivals*, pp.25, 31.

⁹⁹I Karp, 'Festivals', in I Karp and S D Lavine (eds) *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Displays*, Washington (1991), pp.282-3.

large, carry Australian flags, the pleasure craft in the bay outnumbered and overshadowed Phillip's First Fleet, and Australia Day 1988 turned into a "'glorified celebration of Sydney Harbour'", probably the "greatest one-day spectacle ... in one city" in Australia.¹⁰⁰ Similarly those who visited the travelling exhibition which traversed the country in 1988 seemed to be more concerned with the logistics of staging the exhibits than its 'postmodern' content. The exhibition, for instance, attempted to attack consumerism through displaying a giant supermarket trolley. The response of most visitors to this, and some of the other exhibits, was that it was "'shoddy'" and "'badly made'". The differing mixture of exhibits, seemingly lacking direction, also meant that many visitors 'got lost' as they attempted to follow a pathway through the exhibition and its "jungle of images". As Cochrane and Goodman point out, this "disjunction between 'style' and audience" was the exhibition's major flaw. There was a "great divide" separating the exhibition's creators, who conceptualised their work in the academy and its urban centres, from their public, the mass audiences in small towns across the country, whose expectations were markedly dissimilar to their own.¹⁰¹

The Van Riebeeck festival in 1952 attracted a large audience, some experiencing the events, pageants and exhibitions in an immediate sense by forming part of 'the crowd' while others engaged with the festival more vicariously through their radios and/or by watching *African Mirror* or *Ons Nuus* newsreels as part of the entertainment package in the local movie theatre. Attempting to assess or gauge some of their responses to what they saw and heard is a virtually impossible task. Studies that have been undertaken on viewer responses to exhibitions tend to rely either on some sort of survey conducted during or immediately after the exhibition or else on overhearing conversations as visitors gaze and wander through the display.¹⁰² Not only is it impossible to carry out this sort of research for the Van Riebeeck

¹⁰⁰Spearritt, 'Making the Bicentenary', pp.17, 18, 20.

¹⁰¹Cochrane and Goodman, 'The Great Australian Journey', pp.42-3.

¹⁰²Examples of the former are Patricia Davison's analysis of visitor responses to the bushman diorama at the South African museum, (P Davison 'Reading Exhibitions: Towards an Understanding of Popular Responses to Museum Representations of other Cultures', Myths unpublished conference paper, *Myths, Monuments, Museums: New Premises?*, History Workshop, University of the Witwatersrand (16-18 July 1992) and the questionnaire run by a newspaper in Vancouver, attempting to see how their readers perceived Expo 86. (D Ley and K Olds, 'World's Fairs and the Culture of Consumption in the Contemporary City' in K Anderson and F Gale (eds), *Inventing Places*, Melbourne (1992), pp.178-192.) Cynthia Kros uses the method of overhearing to gauge some responses to Gold Reef City, the theme park to the south of Johannesburg. (C Kros, 'Experiencing

festival, but the utilisation of the survey method as an assessment of the experiential nature of the displays must be questioned. Notwithstanding the great strides which these studies make in our understanding of viewer responses, in that meanings of displays are no longer imputed merely by the images they present, the question and answer format can very easily become a way to authenticate the author's views on the exhibits. Their seemingly 'factual' nature, derived from the largely qualitative measure in the survey, gives them an authenticity which both silences and obscures the author who framed the 'question' and gave voice to the selected 'answers'. These authors are usually aware of this problem in their work, and it is acknowledged as a major factor to be taken into account when their 'results' are read, but once the viewer responses are presented they tend to take on a world of their own, overriding the authorial voice and asserting a genuineness that the process of their compilation denies.

This still leaves the problem of how to examine responses to the Van Riebeeck festival among its audiences and how they, in their 'festive spirit' may have gone beyond the official program.¹⁰³ The most obvious way of dealing with this is through a procedure that has almost become an instruction for South African historians in the past ten years: go out, with your tape recorder, and interview the people who were there! Oral history has become the method to recover 'history from below', the voice of the dispossessed and silenced in the written text of South Africa's past. Yet, in very much the same way as research over viewer responses to exhibits has taken on a validating role, so oral history has become a way of establishing the real 'people's voices' and achieving an authenticity which only "personal testimony confers". In the historian's parlance it becomes a primary text which starts to take precedence over the written record, which for so long was the basis of the 'historical profession'. This is not to argue that one form of evidence should take precedence over the other, but that what happens is that, like documentary evidence, oral testimony is mined for the 'primary evidence' it can

a Century in a Day? Making More of Gold Reef City', *South African Historical Journal*, 29 (November 1993), pp.28-43. Cochrane and Goodman, 'The Great Australian Journey', also 'overhear' conversations to help assess how visitors viewed the travelling exhibition during the Australian bicentenary.

¹⁰³Ozouf, *Festivals*, p.32.

produce for the historian and then, like the beginning texts discussed earlier, is used for the purpose of realising the "genuine" effect.¹⁰⁴

Taking full cognisance of this critique, I will very explicitly mine the oral testimonies, which I and others have collected, along with school year books, newspapers and magazines of the time, to look at viewer responses to the Van Riebeeck festival fair which had approximately 800 000 visitors and was probably the most popular attraction of the entire festival. But, by using the oral narrative, I make no claims to its ability to recover memory or consciousness or to present a representative sample of a cross-section of visitors to the Jan van Riebeeck festival fair. Instead it is used, in chapter four, to take the reader, along with the festival goers, on a guided tour of the fair, the itinerary and content of which I have explicitly constructed from the 'historical record'. Together, we will visit the English and Dutch villages which were built on Cape Town's foreshore, venture underground at a gold mine at the seaside, take a ride on a rickshaw, and gaze upon the 'natives' living in their reconstructed 'kraals'. These exhibits at the fair, like the festival as a whole, did not "simply express a central, coherent communal meaning" and also evoked individual subjective responses. The guided tour is intended to draw out some of the different ways in which the exhibits on the foreshore were constructed and how visitors responded in varying ways to the representations on display.¹⁰⁵

Through negotiating a delicate line between differing and contesting versions of the past and perceptions of its visual tableaux, the national histories of the Van Riebeeck festival were primarily concerned with re-mapping the bold outlines of the country. But, in 1952, through the festival, an effort was made as well to redraw the map of local history, to name, frame, locate and historicise the "internal 'contents'" of the land.¹⁰⁶ A series of mail coaches traversed

¹⁰⁴K Daniels, 'Slicing the Past', *Australian Historical Studies*, 23, 91 (1988), p.136. For further discussion on how oral evidence is used in an almost documentary style and mined for evidence see I Hofmeyr, 'Reading Oral Texts: New Methodological Directions', paper presented at the South African and Contemporary History Seminar, University of the Western Cape (3 October 1995); G Minkley and C Rassool, 'Oral History in South Africa: Some Critical Questions', Centre for African Studies Seminar, University of Cape Town (22 March 1995).

¹⁰⁵Hunt, 'Introduction', p.14.

¹⁰⁶Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.30.

the country from January 1952, gathering local histories and providing the occasion for local festivals on their journeys to Cape Town to greet Van Riebeeck when he landed in April on the shores of "Darkest Africa".¹⁰⁷ It is this re-making of local history as the mail coaches returned to the 'mother city' in 1952 that is dealt with in chapter five of the thesis.

The journeys to Cape Town in 1952 in many senses parallel similar expeditions which have taken place subsequently during festivals of founding. The Columbus quinqucentennial saw the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria take to the seas once again, calling at ports along the US west and east coasts. This provided an occasion for local dignitaries to greet the caravels and put on their own displays in museums and art galleries around some of the issues raised by the quinqucentennial. To coincide with their arrival in Miami on 15 February 1992, for instance, the Historical Museum of South Florida hosted "A Major Exhibition" entitled "First Encounters: Spanish Exploration in the Caribbean and the United States, 1492-1570", which focused on the encounters between the "Native Americans" and the Europeans at the Spanish settlement of La Florida.¹⁰⁸ A few kilometres away, at the Miami Space Transit Planetarium, the "showtime schedule" included "The Explorers", a thirty minute journey in the steps of Columbus, Marco Polo and Captain Cook, exploring "the routes to the New World and beyond". An adjacent exhibition, "The Noble Savage: The New World in the Eyes of the Explorers", displayed images depicting "naïve" European perspectives of 16th and 17th century Florida and its people.¹⁰⁹ In Australia in 1988, Captain Phillip did not undertake his voyage from England once again, but local communities were supposed to be drawn into the celebrations through the travelling exhibition. As it went from town to town, local groups were invited to put on their display in the exhibition in a special space set aside for them. In this way, the exhibition was supposed to "guarantee" that it was "not some controversial view imposed from Sydney". Here the spectacle provided for "townsfolk" was not the Tall Ships

¹⁰⁷*Official Festival Programme*, p.100.

¹⁰⁸'The visit of the 3 Caravels to Miami, February 15, 1992', postcard, Antonio Carbajo, Language Research Press, Miami Springs, Florida; 'First Encounters: Spanish Explorations in the Caribbean and the United States', pamphlet for a travelling exhibit from the Florida Museum of Natural History, Miami (1992).

¹⁰⁹Miami Space Transit Planetarium, 'Showtime Schedule' (December 1992).

or Phillip's landing, but aimed to focus on "the familiar, local, artifacts and images", although it was not too successful in accomplishing its purpose in this regard.¹¹⁰

What is distinct about the journeys in these festivals of founding is the way that they provided the track for returning inwards to the place of (re)discovery and for local space to negotiate itself into a 'national past'. In South Africa this contrasted markedly with a series of celebrations which had been undertaken in 1938 to commemorate the centenary of the Great Trek. The route then taken had been one of conquest, ox-wagons moving to the interior from Van Riebeeck's statue in Cape Town and enveloping 'the people' and local communities in the celebration of a national Afrikaner trek. As the nine ox-wagons travelled through 500 towns, covering the route of South Africa, which the voortrekkers had made "*bewoonbaar ... vir 'n blanke ras*" [inhabitable for a white race], streets found themselves renamed after Voortrekker leaders, newly born children acquired names commemorating the trek and, in speech after speech, the "virtues of the Voortrekkers" and their establishment of an "*onoorwinlike voorpos ... vir die westelike beskawing*" [impregnable frontier for western civilisation] were extolled.¹¹¹ Fourteen years later, the route was reversed and Van Riebeeck's mail coaches provided a way to reclaim the discovery of the country and the land through incorporation rather than conquest, reconstituting the local through its reserved 'space' in a national past.

What this chapter takes as its starting point is that what is constituted as national and local history is not a predetermined given, with the latter merely having to be inserted into the context of the former. To do so would take us into the debate over local history in the late 1970s and early '80s in Britain around whether the mere production of local pasts by working class communities constituted socialist practice and history, or whether the content had to be explicitly located in some broader Marxist theoretical framework in order to be considered

¹¹⁰ Cochrane and Goodman, 'The Great Australian Journey', p.36.

¹¹¹ A Grundlingh and H Sapiro, 'From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual? The Changing Fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrializing South Africa, 1938-1988', *South African Historical Journal*, 21 (1989), pp.19-20; D Mostert (compiler), *Gedenkboek Van Die Ossewaens Op Die Pad Van Suid-Afrika*, Cape Town (1940), p.59.

socialist.¹¹² Even though these approaches appear to be different, they share an underlying assumption that the production of local history has to be located in an agreed given national and international historical framework. The debate was how to accomplish this task, either explicitly (through theory and History) or implicitly (through practice). What was not questioned is exactly what is international, national and local history and how these boundaries are constituted. Broadly speaking, it will be this issue which is of concern in this chapter. Instead of locating the local histories in some fixed national or international past, whether that be repression and opposition, colonialism and resistance, or capital and class, an attempt will be made to examine their production and reproduction in the contests and negotiations over their contents and space.

These contests over local and national pasts were no more evident than in the eastern Cape, which Van Riebeeck's mail coach, 'Settlers', traversed between February and March 1952. It was here, on the "eastern limits of the Cape Colony", that the "frontier between white and black" dominated local pasts.¹¹³ In local public narratives, stories were told of a country where the "[b]lood-curdling war cries of the Amakhosa" were tamed by "intrepid fighters" and settlers in a "desolate" land "infested with wild animals and hostile Natives".¹¹⁴ Problems began to emerge when this local narrative started to encounter a national past that was beginning to surface on the streets of Cape Town, where it was being maintained that "Van Riebeeck Never Saw the Bantu" and that "*Xosas en ander stamme was toe nog onbekend*" [Xhosa and other tribes were then still unknown].¹¹⁵ There was obviously no easy fit between this national past and that being told in the eastern Cape. As the mail coach 'Settlers' travelled from Umtata, through Grahamstown, King William's Town, East London and Port Elizabeth to Cape Town, collecting local histories on its way, it had to mediate a path between these

¹¹²See K Worpole, 'A Ghostly Pavement: the Political Implications of Local Working-Class History'; J White, 'Beyond Autobiography'; S Yeo, 'The Politics of Community Publications', all in R Samuel (ed) *People's History and Socialist Theory*, London (1981), pp.21-48.

¹¹³N Mostert, *Frontiers*, New York (1992), p.xvii.

¹¹⁴Municipality of Grahamstown, *Grahamstown: Eastern Province of the Republic of South Africa*, Grahamstown (1963), p.1.

¹¹⁵*South Africa's Heritage*, p.56; *Die Jongspan*, 28 March 1952.

pasts. Chapter five is the story of that journey through the towns of the eastern Cape, through local and national pasts, and the various attempts to define and fit the narratives.

When Mayor Mieke Bloemendaal was greeted by Jan van Riebeeck on 28 October 1992, at an airport soon to be renamed Cape Town International, she was therefore not merely reasserting a Dutch/South African connection, stretching back to 1652, but her baggage contained more recent pasts which her hosts had helped re-create. These pasts had been constituted through a series of encounters in the early months of 1952, when the Van Riebeeck festival set in motion a process of mediation among and between differing European narratives, anti-celebratory campaigns, local and national history and the spectators who 'saw it all'. This thesis explores how South African national pasts were produced for and through this commemorative event and the multiple confrontations over its contents. In these productions Jan van Riebeeck and his wife, Maria de la Quellerie, discovered that their ten year sojourn at the Cape had been transformed into 300 years of settlement and it was their founding on the beach at Granger Bay in 1952 for which Mayor Bloemendaal was paying penance in Villiersdorp some forty years later.

CHAPTER ONE

VAN RIEBEECK'S PASTS

When stories are recounted about the past of the Dutch commander at the Cape of Good Hope between 1652 and 1662, Jan van Riebeeck,¹ they tell of his birth in Culemborg, his family background, his early days under tutelage of his grandfather, the mayor of Culemborg, his apprenticeship as a surgeon, joining the Dutch East India Company and being posted to Batavia, becoming a merchant and administrator in the East Indies, being sent home by the Company for misconduct, his marriage to Maria de la Quellerie and his assignment to set up a refreshment station at the Cape. Over the next ten years what follows are accounts of his administrative duties, his encounters with the local population and dealings with various company officials, all of which terminate in 1662 when he departs for Malacca and his past at the Cape comes to an end.

Of this past so much has been said and written - some would say far too much - that it has become more than merely a set of stories about an individual's past. It has been accorded the status of being significant, providing a context for a moment that is marked in different ways as the beginning in South African history: the beginning of apartheid, the beginning of colonialism, the beginning of 'western civilisation' in southern Africa. The life stories which lead to this starting point and the narratives of initial encounters which are set around the instance of proclaimed import have been made so meaningful that the professor of history at the University of Stellenbosch, H B Thom, could confidently assert, in introducing the 1952 edition of Van Riebeeck's diary, "[o]f the latter part of his life, little need here be said".²

To make this past into history, though, meant more than merely according it significance. A narrative had to be built up and gaps filled in, especially when they were glaringly apparent. On one level this involved the historian in the metaphorical guise of a detective, ferreting

¹See for example, E C Godee Molsbergen, *Die Stichter van Hollands Zuid-Afrika*, Amsterdam (1912); C Louis Leipoldt, *Jan Van Riebeeck: A Biographical Study*, London (1935); H B Thom, 'Introduction' to H Thom (ed), *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, volume 1, 1651-1655, Cape Town (1952); B J Barker, *Jan van Riebeeck: Die Nederlandse Vestiging Aan Die Kaap*, Cape Town (1989).

²Thom, 'Introduction', p.xxvi.

through the archives, sifting through the clues and discovering the missing links. One of Van Riebeeck's biographers, C Louis Leipoldt, for instance, claimed that he had read all the relevant papers "printed and written" which were located at the archives in Cape Town, the Hague and Batavia.³ But history did not merely fall into place through the process of discovery. The historian as story teller had to take over, weaving the found and selected information into a 'good tale' which 'reads well', giving to the world "a formal coherence past 'reality' never had".⁴ In this process of 'reconstruction' conjecture took over and assumptions were derived from a sketched out context, couched in a language of probabilities and possibilities. School "undoubtedly played an important part in his [Van Riebeeck's] training", wrote Leipoldt, one "may assume that [he] was taught Latin and perhaps a little Greek", "probably ... [his] grandfather ... took care that the youngster should be properly grounded" and "probably his own temperament" led him to choose the profession of surgeon. Leipoldt was so convinced that the context into which he had selected to write Van Riebeeck was crucial that he had "no shadow of a doubt that the liberal atmosphere in which he was privileged to pass his childhood left an enduring mark upon him, and that he reacted favourably to the cultural stimuli, whatever these might have been".⁵

Associated with this according of significance to Van Riebeeck's past and the construction of meaningful narratives of his life was the emergence of a series of 'historical' debates. Was he born in 1618 or 1619? Was he nobly born, as Leipoldt claimed, or a lowly company bureaucrat, as the Cape Colony's official historian Theal suggested? Was he dismissed from the service of the company for large scale corruption or for merely augmenting his small salary? Was he really that interested in the Cape or was it a stepping stone to further his career? Was he really the author of his diary or was it written by administrative officers at the Cape? Was Van Riebeeck an "advocate of extreme and iniquitous measures" against the local Khoi population or was his harshness infrequent and "made under extreme pressures and

³Leipoldt, *Jan Van Riebeeck*, pp.vii-viii.

⁴R Braun, 'The Holocaust and Problems of Historical Representation', *History and Theory*, 33, 2 (1994), p.181.

⁵Leipoldt, *Jan Van Riebeeck*, pp.20-22.

exceptional circumstances"?⁶ These debates, more than asserting difference, reflect an agreement over what Cohen calls the "constitutive requisites for debate": "knowledge, language, relevance, polarity, closure".⁷ There is a consensus that Van Riebeeck's past is important, that it is an issue of contestation and that some form of 'truth' about this past can ultimately be discovered in an undetermined future which will set the debate to rest. Its location as debate elevates it into the realm of critical discourse, seen as an integral element of the historical craft where 'the evidence' can make one view "more veridical than the other".⁸

Van Riebeeck's past was therefore made into history by it being marked off as significant, through the construction of historical narratives around his life and the forging of related debates. This corresponds with the distinction which Carr made between the past as 'all that happened' and history as the according of significance to certain events in that past.⁹ The use of the passive voice seems to indicate that this signification occurred almost naturally, by a process of elimination and osmosis. Carr, however, went further and argued that it was the historian or the professional chronicler who determined what should be the 'facts of history', which were then either accepted or rejected by "other historians" on the basis of the interpretation offered.¹⁰ What this formulation overlooks is the way that history is also very often made in the public domain, both in the sense of being authored by those who do not form part of the guild and also by its authority being affirmed through public evaluation. There is more of a "shared author-ity" between the public domain and the academy in the constitution of historical "authorship and interpretive authority".¹¹

⁶G Theal, *History of South Africa Before 1795*, vol 3, Cape Town (1964), (First Edition, 1907), pp.6, 129; Leipoldt, *Jan Van Riebeeck*, p.13; Thom, 'Introduction', pp.xvi-xxvi; J Naidoo, *Tracking Down Historical Myths*, Johannesburg (1989), p.20.

⁷D W Cohen, *The Combining of History*, Chicago (1994), p.54.

⁸Naidoo, *Tracking Down*, p.20.

⁹E H Carr, *What is History?* (2nd edition), Harmondsworth (1987), pp.11-12.

¹⁰Carr, *What is History?*, pp.12-13.

¹¹M Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, Albany (1990), pp.xxi. This concept of a "shared author-ity" extends Hamilton's argument that the production of history does not merely occur within the academy (Hamilton, 'Authoring Shaka'). Here, it is being argued that the authenticity of history (both academic and public) is also tested and derived from the public domain. By doing this I am, quite liberally, extending Frisch's argument which tends to see the power derived from the oral record

In the making of Van Riebeeck it was this "shared author-ity" which changed his past into history. A central argument in this thesis is that a key moment around which this transformation occurred was the festival organised in 1952 to commemorate the 300th anniversary of his landing at the Cape. Here a range of academics, artists, dramatists, curators, dancers, athletes and musicians meshed together in producing history which relied for its authority on public approval and intellectual scrutiny. Yet, this moment was not one of beginning, where history was virtually created from the 'sands of time'. As "the world/the past comes to us always already as stories",¹² so Van Riebeeck had acquired a series of histories prior to 1952. This chapter concerns itself with those past histories, their constructions and meanings. It examines how Van Riebeeck and his past started to become history through commemorative events, school textbooks and the publication of the daily journal of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape (Van Riebeeck's diary). The implication of treating each of these as discrete historical productions is that it does not pit one form of history against the other in terms of its success or otherwise as a mobilising agent. The latter approach is one adopted by Anne McClintock in her critique of Benedict Anderson's location of the origins of national consciousness in the "convergence of capitalism and print technology".¹³ In taking issue with Anderson, she argues that print capital has had very limited appeal in the nineteenth and twentieth century, given the low levels of literacy. Instead she maintains that it was through the "mass national community spectacle" that collective unity was effectively mobilised.¹⁴ Undeniably McClintock is correct in pointing to the appeal of these spectacles, but by setting up her point as an argument against Anderson she fails to look at how different forms of history perform different functions and how they interact with each other. With other moments of Van Riebeeck's past appearance these histories, in commemorations, school books and the diary, offered respectively a tradition of ritual, an abbreviated past and historical authenticity. Those who organised his past in 1952 were able

(community histories in particular) as constituting a challenge to dominant versions of the past. I do not accept Frisch's limited view of a shared authority (with the emphasis on shared) as it seemingly neglects the multiple and differing layers of power that are present in the production of history.

¹²Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History*, p.9.

¹³B Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London (1993), p.46.

¹⁴A McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, New York (1995), p.374.

to draw upon all of these histories and their different offerings, incorporating, rearranging and discarding elements from these various forms to fit in with the plans for the festival.

Commemorating the past

The ritual acts associated with ceremonies of commemoration are generally seen as moments in which a shared or common identity is asserted. This identity is based upon attempts to establish, through the ceremony, a collective memory where an "original narrative", usually built on the themes of "struggle, sacrifice, and victory", becomes the cohesive mechanism for community formation. This implies a notion of "spatial continuity", where the "commemorative ceremony" bounds a community into memory, in the dual sense of setting its limits and forging a singular identity.¹⁵ According to Young, this sense of "remembering together" can become so powerful that what is shared is no longer the event itself but the memory of the commemorations.¹⁶

More than establishing spatial boundaries, these ceremonies also position individuals into communities as temporal entities. Time becomes part of a wider framework, where individual change, in its uniqueness and constant transformability, is "transcended ... by ensuring the preservation of collective memory".¹⁷ People are brought into the community through 'historic time' with its markers which signify before and after. This is not to argue that in commemorative ceremonies identities become fixed in the same time and the same characteristics. Instead they continually change and mutate "through the transformation of collective memory".¹⁸ It is precisely because of this transformability that commemorations, which evoke 'the past', construct it and resurrect it for collective memory, are such a powerful force in constituting historical knowledge.¹⁹

¹⁵Braun, 'The Holocaust', pp.176-7.

¹⁶J E Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven (1993), p.7.

¹⁷Braun, 'The Holocaust', p.177.

¹⁸Braun, 'The Holocaust', p.177.

¹⁹Cohen, *The Combing*, p.242.

Deriving information from the daily register of the Dutch India Company at the Cape,²⁰ it would appear that, on the whole, the commander had very little time for commemorative ceremonies in his period of residence from 1652 to 1662, even at the time of arrival and landing. As with most 'founders' and 'discoverers' it was the first sight of land to 'possess/settle/inhabit' which was regarded as the moment of significance and which did involve some sort of ceremonial activity. When the chief mate sighted Table Mountain on 5 April 1652, Van Riebeeck praised God, hoisted the flags of the *Dromedaris*, fired a gun and rewarded the sailor with "four Spanish reals in specie".²¹ It was the "active gaze" on the land which was crucial, because it sought to turn claims into rights. Once the eye had been cast upon the land as a supposedly rightful possession, then what was to follow in a seemingly seamless progression would be the naming and appropriation.²²

The landing the following day, which later would become the central focus of the origin narratives, was barely remarked upon in the journal and accorded no significance as a first primarily because it was not one, either of European founding or settlement. The Cape, over the previous century, had become a frequent stop-over route for ships travelling to the east and indeed, Van Riebeeck had spent eighteen days there when returning to the Netherlands from Batavia in 1648. Moreover, the English had established a settlement at Table Bay in the 1620s, although it was never formally recognised by the crown.²³ It is little wonder then that shortly after sighting Table Mountain on 5 April, Van Riebeeck sent two scouts ahead to "find out what ships - and how many - might be lying at anchor in the roadstead at Table Bay".²⁴ Clearly there was an expectation that other 'Europeans', particularly the Portuguese and perhaps the English, would be at anchor. When the scouts reported, however, that there were no other ships, the *Goede Hoop* and the *Dromedaris* entered the bay and the captain was sent

²⁰Who exactly the author of this document, known as the *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, is not entirely clear. See the discussion on this issue later in this chapter. The version used here is the 1952 edition edited by H B Thom.

²¹*Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 5 April 1652, pp.19-20.

²²A Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism*, New Haven (1993), p.34.

²³Barker, *Jan van Riebeeck*, pp.6-7.

²⁴*Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 6 April 1652, p.20.

ashore to pick up post from previous Dutch ships which had stopped over and to acquire "some greens" for nourishment.²⁵ It was only in the evening of the following day (7 April 1652) that Van Riebeeck finally went ashore, with no ceremony, "to consider more or less where the fort should be built" and then returned to the *Dromedaris*, which was to be both home and operational base for the next few weeks.²⁶ Not until 24 April did he finally set up camp on the shore, without any fuss or bother. "We went ashore with all our baggage and family to stay there in a make-shift wooden hut - rather roughly constructed for the time being - in order that the work may proceed more satisfactorily."²⁷

What was important for Van Riebeeck was to carry out his duties as a "servant of higher masters",²⁸ God and the Dutch East India Company. The instructions to Van Riebeeck, whom the Company in no way regarded as either a 'discoverer' or 'founder', had been to establish a fort so as to secure the revictualling station and it was the ceremonies and identities established around the construction and occupation of this fort which were of prime importance in the first two years of settlement. Positioned between the sea in the northeast and the Fresh River in the west, this fortification signified possession against the 'potential enemies' - other European traders and the local Khoi inhabitants - who could threaten the Company's ability to secure a permanent refreshment station along a profitable trading route. In this vision identities were defined by Van Riebeeck along an insider/outsider frontier, with the fort and its inhabitants - the 'servants of the Company and God' - setting the bounds of inclusion/exclusion.²⁹ The first ceremonies which took place over a month after landing were therefore associated with establishing the identity of the fort and its inhabitants. On Sunday 12 May, in a square in the incomplete fort, "the first sermon, and the Lord's Supper was

²⁵ *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 6 April 1652, p.20.

²⁶ *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 7 April 1652, p.25.

²⁷ *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 24 April 1652, p.34.

²⁸ Pagden, *European Encounters*, p.34.

²⁹ C Coetzee, 'Visions of Disorder and Profit: The Khoikhoi and the First Years of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape', *Social Dynamics*, 20, 2 (1994), pp.40-1.

celebrated" and three days later, the fort was named Goede Hoop "in accordance of our instruction of our Lords and Masters [of the Dutch East India Company]".³⁰

It was only two years later, on 6 April 1654, once the fort had been completed and the initial settlement was able to secure itself against 'the outsiders', that the landing was commemorated by Van Riebeeck. This ceremony is crucial as it sets up the genealogy for future celebrations of the landing, giving them a 'tradition' to resurrect rather than a past to invent. The journal recorded,

We have ... resolved, and also for the first time begun to celebrate this 6th day of April in the name of the Almighty, and henceforth to set it aside for all time as a day of thanksgiving and prayer, so that our descendants may never forget the mercies we have received at the Lord's hands, but may always remember them to the Glory of God.³¹

Leipoldt refers to this moment as "the first public holiday" in South Africa, Thom noted in a footnote to the diary that "[a]lso the following two years Van Riebeeck celebrated the day of landing", and when Van Riebeeck's day was commemorated in the 20th century, reading this extract from the journal became a central feature of the proceedings.³² Yet, it would seem that the reason for commemorating the landing in 1654 was the problems that the settlement was experiencing at the time, particularly with the scarcity of food, and the concern over when the return fleet would arrive with relief. Indeed, before commenting on the day of prayer, the diary entry for 6 April 1654 is concerned with how there is a lack of food "to fill the hungry bellies of the men".³³ At this moment of intense stress, it seemed necessary to hold a small scale ceremony, involving a prayer meeting, to give thanks, at least, to their "safe arrival". What is also notable about this initial ceremony in 1654 is that in as much as it commemorates the "safe arrival" it also locates the happenings in terms of the identity being established around the fortification, linking the landing with the construction of the fort

³⁰ *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 12 and 15 May 1652, p.39. The sermon on 12 May was later to be inscribed into the history of the Dutch Reformed Church as the first *nagmaal* (Holy Communion) to be held in South Africa: P L Olivier (ed), *Ons Gemeentlike Feesalbum*, Cape Town (1952), p.28.

³¹ *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 6 April 1654, p.226.

³² Leipoldt, *Jan van Riebeeck*, p.142; *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 6 April 1654, p.226.

³³ *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 6 April 1654, p.225.

"through the Holy guidance of God", the former facilitating the latter and the spatial ordering of the settlement in physical and cognitive terms.³⁴

After this initial ceremony the diary records four further occurrences of this day of prayer - in 1655, 1656, 1659 and 1660 - during Van Riebeeck's time as commander at the Cape. They all seem to have been low key affairs, usually involving a prayer meeting led by a minister whose ship happened to be in the bay at the time.³⁵ One must assume that in other years the ceremonies did not take place and/or there was no minister available at the time and/or they were not recorded in the company journal. In any case it would seem to indicate that far from being important annual gatherings at which an identity based upon 'landing' or 'founding' was inscribed into shared memory as a moment of "joy and gratitude" which the commander had "so piously instituted", they were insignificant when compared with attempts to secure the viability of the refreshment station for their Lords.³⁶ Much more a moment of "joy and gratitude" was when the return fleet visited the shores of the Cape, bringing with them supplies for the station. Once the cargo had been unloaded and the ships had departed the Cape, the commander would issue orders for the company servants to take a holiday and be treated with wine, food and tobacco. This holiday is recorded in the diary as an "annual custom", indicating that rather than founding a settlement on 6 April, it was maintaining a sometimes very precarious revictualling station that was more important for the company's officials at the Cape.³⁷

One hundred years later, according to *Drie Eeue: Die Verhaal Van Ons Vaderland* - a five volume history of South Africa written specially for the Van Riebeeck tercentenary - there was much more enthusiasm for commemorating the landing than there had been in the early days of the settlement. Attempting to secure a direct lineage for a shared memory among a community identified as the "*blanke ras*" [white race], the author of volume one, Anna

³⁴ *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, 6 April 1654, p.226.

³⁵ *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, vol 1, 6 April 1655, p.306; vol 2, 6 April 1656, p.27; vol 3, 6 April 1659, p 30; vol 3, 8 April 1660, p 199.

³⁶ Thom footnote, *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, vol 1, p.149; Leipoldt, *Jan van Riebeeck*, p.142.

³⁷ *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, vol 2, 9 April 1656, 10 June 1657, pp.28, 124.

Boeseken, uses the Journal of Cape Governors (the *Dag Register*) as her primary source to relate how the first centenary of the landing was remembered with a series of prayer meetings throughout the Cape colony, which by this time had extended some 300 kilometres from the castle on the shores of Table Bay. In churches from Stellenbosch to the Swartland, this history tells us, services were held on Saturday 8 April 1752 to thank God for the landing, for peace, for the produce of the land and that there were now "*genoeg blankes*" [enough whites] in the colony. Cast by Anna Boeseken as a moment of divine intervention to parallel the events some hundred years previously, the weather conditions that are described in the *Dag Register* with almost monotonous regularity are transformed into a metaphor for the commemoration. The black storm clouds that had gathered earlier in the day gave way to bright sunlight [the landing of whites?] as shots were fired from the castle (which had replaced the original fort) and from ships in Table Bay. The brief description of the festivities ends with the Dutch governor, Ryk Tulbagh, who had just assumed his duty at the Cape, hosting a dinner for the "*vernaamste amptenare, burgers en besoekende vreemdelinge*" [most distinguished officials, citizens and visiting foreigners] at the Cape.³⁸

This description of the commemoration on 8 April 1752 is similar to Theal's in the second volume of his *History of South Africa*, first published in 1888. Relying mainly on a directive from the Political Council, which governed the Cape, he notes that the day was observed in churches "by the Europeans in South Africa as a day of thanksgiving to Almighty God for the undisturbed possession of the colony by the Company for one hundred years".³⁹ Although Boeseken and Theal differ in their narrative approach - for the former the climatic changes provide the metaphor for the nature of the celebrations, while for the latter the events are located within the administrative ambit of the Company - both emphasise the religious element of the centennial and the racial identification of the participants as whites or Europeans. In this way the line of descent to the present of 1888 and 1952 is established

³⁸A Boeseken, *Drie Eeue: Die Verhaal Van Ons Vaderland*, Deel 1, Cape Town (1952), pp.169, 210; Journal of Cape Governors (Dag Register), 8 April 1752, CA, VC 27. Boeseken does not indicate what her sources are, but her narrative is almost the same as that in the journal with some descriptive additions. I am grateful to Wayne Dooling for assistance with the translation of the 18th century Dutch documents.

³⁹G M Theal, *History of South Africa 1691-1795*, vol 2, London (1888), p.143; Resolusies van die Politieke Raad, 21 March 1752, CA, C 130.

through giving history ('tradition') to a 'race' which is defined almost as an immutable concept in a spatial location forever termed South Africa.

It is highly improbable that such a clearly defined sense of racial identity that Theal and Boeseken read back from the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century existed in the Cape in the 1750s.⁴⁰ Racial identities probably did exist in the eighteenth century but people might not have described themselves specifically as white or black. This is not to deny that the social and cultural world of the eighteenth century Cape was ascribed with racial meaning. Indeed, while the gatherings in 1752 possibly may not have been moments of explicitly asserting a white identity with a common racial heritage, they did set the [white] Christian world off from the [black] heathen one, the implication being that there was a natural hierarchy of domination.⁴¹ The sermon which was preached by Rev Petrus van der Spuy in Cape Town on the centenary of Van Riebeeck's landing identified the settlers as the chosen people who had returned to Zion, located at the Cape. He used as his text Psalms 147:12-14 in which God is praised for strengthening the gates of Jerusalem, making peace in the realm and filling its fields "with the finest of wheat".⁴² In these terms the Cape was the New Jerusalem, with a clearly inscribed border, keeping those who were not 'chosen' (ie not 'born Christian') at a distance, and being rewarded for doing this by God with prosperity. This evocation of the Cape as a New Jerusalem and the return to Zion was a common theme among Dutch Reformed Church preachers at the Cape in the mid-18th century. It enabled the

⁴⁰For discussions of the emergence of racial identities in South Africa see R Ross, *Beyond the Pale: Essays on the History of Colonial South Africa*, Johannesburg (1994); N Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*, Cambridge (1985); C Crais, *The Making of the Colonial Order*, Johannesburg (1992); R Greenstein, *Genealogies of Conflict: Class, Identity and State in Palestine/Israel and South Africa*, Hanover (1995); A Bank, 'Liberals and Their Enemies: Racial Ideology at the Cape of Good Hope, 1820-1950', unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge (1995).

⁴¹A du Toit and H Giliomee, *Afrikaner Political Thought*, Cape Town (1983), p.10: See also Bank, 'Liberalism and Their Enemies', p.56. I am grateful to John Mason for discussions on this point.

⁴²J Gerstner, *The Thousand Generation Covenant: Dutch Reformed Covenant Theology in Colonial South Africa, 1652-1814*, Leiden (1991), pp.242-3. This identification between colonial settler society and ancient Israel was not peculiar to the Cape. At the centennial celebrations across in the USA in 1876, where orations were the centrepiece of the occasion, speaker after speaker made allusions to the USA carrying out its biblical mission and compared the "sacred destiny of America with that of Ancient Israel", D Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, Chapel Hill (1990), p.10.

settlers, by some strange reversal, to identify themselves not as intruders but as the true inhabitants of the land and the slaves and local Khoi population as aliens.⁴³

The positioning of this structure in 1752 was attributed not to Van Riebeeck or any other individual - his name is not mentioned in the Governor's Journal or the Resolution of the Political Council - but to the possession and occupation of the Cape, by the Company through the "will of God".⁴⁴ Rev Van der Spuy, who relied to a large extent upon the Dutch East India Company for the position he held, did devote a small part of his sermon to Van Riebeeck, but very much as a servant of the Company upon which he showered accolades for its trading enterprise.⁴⁵ To put it in another way, in 1752 the commemorations were organised by the governor at the time, Ryk Tulbagh, in honour of the Dutch East India Company as the bearer of Christianity to the sub-continent. Tulbagh, who had just assumed the governorship, in turn, was able through the ceremony to establish his dual identity as both servant of the Company and of the settlers, an image he pursued relentlessly for much of his governorship, later being written into settler history as a man whose "*groot werk*" [major achievement] was to codify the slave laws and restrict slaves' mobility, ostensibly making Cape Town a "*veiliger oord*" [safer place] for its white inhabitants.⁴⁶

It was only during the nineteenth century, when the company station was transformed into a territorial possession, that Van Riebeeck started to assume a major role on the historical stage. His initial appearance was during the brief interregnum at the beginning of the century when the Cape was handed back to the Dutch after a period of British occupation stretching from 1795 to 1803. In attempting to establish a sense of legitimate authority in the following three years when the Cape was part of the Batavian Republic - the Dutch East India Company had

⁴³S Trapido, 'Van Riebeeck Day and the New Jerusalem: Identity, Community and Violence in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Cape', Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, Postgraduate seminar (5 March 1993), pp.12-14.

⁴⁴Resolusies van die Politieke Raad, 21 March 1752, CA, C 130; Journal of Cape Governors (Dag Register), 8 April 1752, CA, VC 27.

⁴⁵P van der Spuy, *Dank-Altair Gode Ter Eere Opgericht; Of Eene Plegtige Redenvoering Ter Geleentheid Van's Ed Comp Hondert Jaarige Poffeffie des Gouvernements van Cabo de Goede Hoop, In eene Verklaring en Toepaffing van Pf. CXLVII; vers 12,13, en 14*, Utrecht (1753), pp.20, 25.

⁴⁶Boeseken, *Drie Eeue*, Deel 1, p.188.

come to an end in 1798 - the figure of Van Riebeeck became a symbol of continuity in a programme identified by Commissioner De Mist as "*herstichten*" [re-establishment] after a "*treurige*" [sad] interlude.⁴⁷ This was no more evident than on 2 July 1804 when, in an elaborate ceremony, De Mist presented Cape Town with its own coat of arms - *Het Wapen Van Riebeeck* [The Van Riebeeck Crest]. The ceremonial activities started in the morning with a meeting at the Castle of the *Raad van Gemeente* [Political Council] which governed the colony. Thereafter the official delegation proceeded to the town hall, where, to the sounds of trumpets playing in the background, the new coat of arms consisting of three gold rings on a red backdrop with an anchor, was displayed to all in attendance. A 21 gun salute was fired and the members of the *Raad* hosted a special dinner for the local dignitaries. In speech after speech Van Riebeeck was toasted and all generations were called upon to honour and remember his name as the "*Vader*" [father], the "*Grondlegger*" [founder] of the "*Volksplanting*" [settlement] and the first "*Gouverneur*" (governor) of the colony. To crown the activities, the town hall was specially illuminated in the evening, providing a spectacle for the crowd of onlookers who had gathered to witness the day's proceedings, and Cape Town was designated by De Mist as *Riebeeks stad* [Riebeeck's city].⁴⁸

The ceremonial activities of 2 July 1804 mark a significant turn in the history of Van Riebeeck and his landing. No longer is the Dutch East India Company the focus of attention for the commemorations. Instead an individual is being associated with a beginning that is starting to place itself much more in the context of colonial settlement and its identity, with Van Riebeeck, the commander of a company outpost, being transformed into a governor and founder. Clearly for the Dutch rulers the promotion of such feelings was a way to establish a sense of affiliation, particularly when their hold at the Cape was tenuous. Providing a 'local hero', who was also Dutch, could assist tremendously in this process of defending and maintaining their territorial acquisition. De Mist might well have been making a plea for affording the Batavian Republic a sense of longevity at the Cape when he urged the crowd to protect "*zyn Naam [Van Riebeeck] en Wapenschild*" [his name (Van Riebeeck) and coat

⁴⁷*Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansche Tydschrift*, 2, 2 (March-April 1825), p.120.

⁴⁸*Kaapsche Courant*, 7 July 1804; *Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansche Tydschrift*, 2, 2 (March-April 1825), pp.118-123.

of arms] against "*alle buiten- en binnelandsch geweld*" [against all foreign and domestic violence].⁴⁹

This association with a local colonial identity, established during the Batavian Republic period, was the image that Van Riebeeck carried throughout much of the nineteenth century. Generally this took on two forms, one related to a Cape Dutch and the other to a British settler identity. The assumption of an identity as ancestor of the Cape Dutch community was developed in the course of the nineteenth century by a Cape intelligentsia, most of whom were ministers in Dutch Reformed Churches in the colony.⁵⁰ The settler community which had arrived in the Cape during Company rule was increasingly placed under pressure during the initial periods of British colonial rule as a result of periodic shortages of land and labour, accompanied by missionary accusations of inhumane, 'unchristian' treatment to the local population. Some of these settlers had moved northwards in search of new sources of land and labour, outside of the ambit of British control.⁵¹ They cast their journey of occupation into History as an odyssey of preordained founding, labelled the 'Great Trek', virtually turning their backs on the 'colonial pioneer', Jan van Riebeeck, and establishing independent Boer republics. Alternatively, those settlers of Dutch, French and German descent who remained in the colony, and had opposed the 'Great Trek' to the north, became increasingly vocal about their land claims. Setting themselves up as occupying the moral high ground, they countered missionary assertions of unjust treatment by projecting themselves as the bearers of Christianity to a heathen continent. Van Riebeeck, instead of being rejected, was embraced as the initiator of the historical moment which established the "most successful of Christian settlements in Africa" and turned into, what one critic ironically referred to as, the "Saint of the Cape".⁵²

⁴⁹*Kaapsche Courant*, 7 July 1804; *Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikansche Tydschrift*, 2, 2 (March-April 1825), p.122.

⁵⁰Bank, 'Liberals and Their Enemies', pp.244-8.

⁵¹Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, p.91.

⁵²*South African Commercial Advertiser*, 3 April 1852; *Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift*, 2, 7 (1825), p.iv.

This articulation tended to find expression in the more natural domain of intellectuals, newspapers and journals, rather than in public ceremony. The one moment though when it did become part of ceremonial activity was in 1852, when the 200th anniversary of Van Riebeeck's landing was commemorated. Organised by the Dutch Reformed churches in the Cape Colony, the ceremonies, held on Saturday 6 April, took the form of "religious observance". By solemnising the moment "when first European colonists took possession" of southern Africa and introduced the Christian religion, the arrival in 1852 was turned into His landing. The synod of the Dutch Reformed Church saw the day as one of "remembrance of the blessings Almighty God has been pleased to pour down upon the inhabitants" of "this part of Africa".⁵³ In a notice in the *South African Commercial Advertiser* of the planned activities for the anniversary, the emphasis was on how the Dutch Reformed Church, for two centuries, had held up "the torch of truth to so many souls lying in the darkness of nature".⁵⁴ And, when the "Divine Service" took place in Cape Town on 6 April, Reverend A Faure, who had been the editor of the Dutch journal *Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansche Tydschrift*, gave a sermon at the Groote Kerk in Cape Town which dealt with the history of the church in the colony,

... its early difficulties, its progress from small beginnings, and its present flourishing, and hopeful condition from which he deduced its duties, and pointed out the means by which it should devote itself to their fulfilment.⁵⁵

This measured oration about church history contained very little of a sense of mobilising around a notion of a shared Dutchness. In rural centres of the Cape, though, a much more elaborated sense of ethnic identity formation was prevalent. When minister Rev G W A Van der Lingen delivered his sermon in Paarl in April 1852, for instance, he augmented it with a great deal of polemic and likened Van Riebeeck to the biblical figure of Joseph in Egypt sent to deliver his people from religious decay. Van der Lingen regarded it as insulting and impolite that the "new colonists" were not paying sufficient attention to commemorating the landing - the British governor, Harry Smith, had decided not to declare the day a public holiday - and further berated Dutch speakers in the colony for forgetting their language and

⁵³Letter from Rev A Faure requesting that 6 April 1852 be declared a public holiday, Appendix 3 in I Schapera (ed), *David Livingstone South African Papers 1849-1853*, Cape Town (1974), p.178.

⁵⁴*South African Commercial Advertiser*, 3 April 1852.

⁵⁵*South African Commercial Advertiser*, 7 April 1852.

'traditions'.⁵⁶ Yet, these attempts at a specifically ethnic mobilisation seem to have been exceptional at the time. The figure and moment of Van Riebeeck tended to acquire much more of a religious significance as the beginning in the 'progression' which started when the "Christian community [was] established on the skirts of a Heathen continent" and ended in a past future over the next 200 years with "the history of conversion and civilisation penetrating from South to North, every corner of this hitherto dark and melancholy quarter of the globe".⁵⁷

This self-representation by the Cape Dutch community of itself as the leading Christian light in the colony, with Van Riebeeck the torch bearer, did not go unchallenged. Since the 1820s, missionaries, particularly those who were associated with the London Missionary Society, had been vocal in their criticism of the 'unchristian' behaviour of the settlers towards the local Khoi community, their "violent dispossession", "hopeless bondage" and "wrongs and outrages inflicted on the innocent and defenceless".⁵⁸ It was not so much that the missionaries did not want to bring what they defined as 'light' and 'civilisation' to the 'heathen' - indeed they conceived of this as their major task - but that "oppression hindered the conversion and salvation of the Khoisan... Without some degree of material prosperity ... the labors of the missionaries to win souls for Christ would be in vain".⁵⁹ Blame for starting the process of dispossession was laid squarely at the doors of settler society and the greed of Jan van Riebeeck who, not satisfied with directive of the Dutch East India Company to limit his activities to bartering with the Khoi for livestock, seriously considered becoming engaged in deceitful trading practices and perhaps even theft. Van Riebeeck, who had spent merely ten years at the Cape before moving on to what he saw as a more prestigious posting in the East

⁵⁶Bank, 'Liberals and Their Enemies', p.258; R Ross, 'A Tragedy of Manners: Status and respectability at the Cape of Good Hope 1750-1870', unpublished draft manuscript, pp.88-92. Thanks to Robert Ross for permission to quote from the draft of his book.

⁵⁷Ross, 'A Tragedy of Manners', p.92; *South African Commercial Advertiser*, 3 April 1852.

⁵⁸J Phillip, *Researches in South Africa*, vol 1, p.2, quoted in Bank, 'Liberals and Their Enemies', p.240.

⁵⁹Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, pp.197-8.

Indies, thus became, in the missionaries' eyes, the personification of oppression against the Khoi and was thereby identified as the 'first settler'.⁶⁰

By coincidence, one of the most prominent of these missionaries, David Livingstone, was in Cape Town at the time of the 1852 commemoration, and was scathing in his condemnation of the nature of the activities around the two hundredth anniversary of the landing. He saw the 'divine services' as totally hypocritical, for, in his eyes, the Dutch Reformed Church had for two centuries kept silent and condoned "robbery and murder, provided the victims had black skins". Far from being the initiators of Christian principles, the Dutch Reformed Church was "the great bulwark of evil". It was Van Riebeeck, wrote Livingstone, the person who was being "associated [with] the introduction of Christianity" by the celebrators who began this evil when he gazed with envy on the cattle of the Khoi.⁶¹

We see the apostle of peace on earth and good-will to man utterly unable to restrain his greedy soul when viewing the herds of Hottentot cattle quietly feeding adjacent to the fort. He wonders at the mysterious dispensation of Providence, by which such fine animals have been given to the heathen... This ancient Chartist coolly records his calculations as to how many of the Hottentot "*cattle might be stolen with the loss of but a very few of his own party*".⁶²

For asserting this claim to the possession of others as if it were a right, Van Riebeeck should have been excommunicated from the church rather than being venerated, Livingstone maintained. Livingstone even made this into a beginning in the "bitter" history of colonial settlement in southern Africa. It was, he declared, the first enunciation of the "Van Riebeeck principle" whereby the colonialists regarded the "heathen [as] given *to them* for an inheritance".⁶³

The British settler image of Van Riebeeck seems to have emerged in the eastern Cape, where, in the 1820s, a subsidised group of immigrants had been brought in to form an agricultural

⁶⁰Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, pp.198-9; Bank, 'Liberals and Their Enemies', p.241; Schapera (ed), *David Livingstone Papers*, p.73.

⁶¹Schapera (ed), *David Livingstone Papers*, p.73.

⁶²Schapera (ed), *David Livingstone Papers*, p.73. Emphasis in original.

⁶³Schapera (ed), *David Livingstone Papers*, pp.73-4. Emphasis in original.

barrier between the extended Cape colony and Xhosaland. While most of these immigrants had visions of becoming wealthy farmers, the more well off saw themselves in even more grandiose terms as changing into a rural gentry in an idealised 'little England' on the eastern frontier, with the poorer immigrants working for them.⁶⁴ The contradiction contained in these images led to the virtual collapse of the scheme as many settlers migrated to towns to take up commercial and craft activities. Those who remained on the land increasingly came to rely upon African labour, which was in very short supply. Around struggles to acquire land and labour from the African population, a British colonial identity was shaped based upon a clear division between 'civilisation' and 'barbarism'. The settlers, both in the towns and in the countryside, increasingly forgot their 'failures' and portrayed themselves as the "pioneers of the Settlement who cleared the way for British commerce", the bearers of 'progress' who felled "*the first tree ... commence[d] ... the first wattle and daub house - and ... [made] the first furrow ... by a plough in the virgin soil*".⁶⁵ The Africans, who refused to acquiesce in the settler demands were, in turn, depicted as "libidinous, uncontrolled, lazy", treacherous, "savages".⁶⁶ At the forefront in promoting a British settler identity were the editor of *The Graham's Town Journal*, Robert Godlonton, and a local landowner, J C Chase, who together furthered an image of the settlers almost assuming a divinely ordained role as the bearers of civilisation to Africa. Projected onto this racially constructed landscape, Van Riebeeck came to represent, for the British settlers, 'one of us'.⁶⁷ Like them he was now seen as an 'adventurer', 'founder,' 'pioneer', who had planted the first vines and fig trees and had established the lineage of British 'civilisation' and European settlement in South Africa. At a dinner to commemorate the twenty-fourth anniversary of the arrival of the 1820 settlers,

⁶⁴Crais, *The Making of the Colonial Order*, pp.87-90.

⁶⁵'Discourse delivered by the Rev W M Shaw, in St George's Church, Grahamstown, 10 April 1844' in R Godlonton (compiler), *Memorials of the British Settlers of South Africa, being the Records of Public Services held at Graham's Town and Port Elizabeth on the 10th of April and at Bathurst on the 10th May, 1844, in Commemoration of the Landing in Algoa Bay and the Foundation of the Settlement of Albany, in the year 1820*, Grahamstown (1844), South African Library Reprint Series (1971), p.12.

⁶⁶Crais, *The Making of the Colonial Order*, p.129; 'Mr Chase's address on proposing "the memory of those Settlers whom it has pleased Providence to remove"', at Dinner in Port Elizabeth, 10 April 1844, in Godlonton (compiler), *Memorials of the British Settlers*, p.67.

⁶⁷Ross, 'A Tragedy of Manners', pp.87-88. As Ross (p.85) points out, this image of a glorious, triumphalist settler past by Godlonton and Chase did not go unchallenged within the settler communities of the eastern Cape, even though Godlonton assiduously tried to project, through *The Graham's Town Journal*, a singular, unified settler voice.

held in Port Elizabeth in 1844, a toast was drunk to Van Riebeeck and his "gallant band" and a proposal was made that as the day of arrival of Van Riebeeck (6 April) almost coincided with the day 168 years later when the first boat load of British immigrants arrived in the eastern Cape (10 April), that a date between the two "should be fixed ... on which to keep in future one general holiday for both commemorations".⁶⁸

The outcome of this identification of Van Riebeeck as part of the British colonial identity was that he became what the wealthy settlers imagined themselves to be: almost timeless English country squires. It was largely this image that was encapsulated in the mid-nineteenth century painting of Van Riebeeck's landing by Charles Davidson Bell. Bell was a draughtsman who had come to the Cape from Britain in about 1830, and later, after spending time going on expeditions into the interior and taking up a series of clerical posts in the Cape government, became Surveyor General. His strong identification with local Cape political circles and his training as a draughtsman strongly influenced the subject matter which he chose to portray: "native subjects".⁶⁹ Yet this did not mean that he was oblivious to the major trends emerging in English painting, particularly the concern with capturing broad landscapes, a trend that is associated in the Cape with the work of Thomas Bowler. Far from being a direct contrast to the work of Bowler, as Bank suggests,⁷⁰ his painting, particularly of the landing, blends his background of draughtsmanship - the attention to ethnographic detail and the need to pinpoint people into carefully defined locations - with the English picturesque tradition and the Dutch historical movement of the 19th century. In the English tradition broad landscapes were observed from a distance, with the emphasis focused on re-creating images on the "middle plane", situated between a shadowy foreground and a receding background in the distance.⁷¹ It was in this middle plane that the 'historical event' is located and Van Riebeeck appears,

⁶⁸Address by Mr J C Chase on proposing the "memory of Johan Van Riebeeck", in Godlonton (compiler), *Memorials of the British Settlers*, pp.60-62.

⁶⁹A H S, 'Charles Davidson Bell - Designer of the Cape Triangular Stamps', *Africana Notes and News*, 11, 3 (June 1954), pp.81-2; Bank, 'Liberals and Their Enemies', p.286.

⁷⁰Bank, 'Liberals and Their Enemies', p.286.

⁷¹F and E Bradlow, 'The English Vision of the Cape Prior to 1875', Centre for Extra Mural Studies, University of Cape Town (1984), pp.7-8; D Bunn, 'Relocations: Landscape Theory, South African Landscape Practice, and Transmission of Political Value', *Pretexts*, 4, 2 (1993), p.45; J M Coetzee, *White Writing*, Johannesburg (1988), p.39.

attired in a long flowing English-style jacket, carrying a walking stick with a large silver top, accompanied by Cromwellian-type soldiers with guns and an enlarged version of the Company flag. Set slightly further back, and starting to blend into the background of trees and mountains, are a group of local Khoi inhabitants dressed in what appears to be tattered rags, all but one of whom are seated as they greet Van Riebeeck and his colleagues.⁷² The stark contrast in apparel, the spatial location of the two parties and the portly pose of Van Riebeeck as opposed to the almost humble greeting from the Khoi group turn the landing into an archetypal first colonial encounter between the forces of 'civilisation' and 'barbarism'. Van Riebeeck, in his English guise of a rural landlord, is reinforced as the initiator of the civilising mission in southern Africa, and his landing is being painted onto the canvas of the past as the starting point of history that Bell had helped make.

Yet, for all this association between an identity as an English settler and the bearer of 'civilisation', there was a lukewarm response from the British colonial administration towards commemorating Van Riebeeck. The increasing appropriation of his figure by the Dutch-speaking intelligentsia tended to overshadow his English identity and giving undue prominence to Van Riebeeck might serve to mobilise opposition to the colonial authorities.⁷³ It was thus only towards the end of the century, as British colonial ambitions in southern Africa extended their horizons, that the self-same Van Riebeeck, who had appeared on the painting by Bell, found himself perched upon a pedestal at the end of Cape Town's main thoroughfare, Adderley Street. Dressed in the same clothes, still carrying the walking stick and assuming an almost identical posture, the statue, which was commissioned by Cecil John Rhodes in 1896 as a gift to the city of Cape Town, carries with it the colonial identity that Bell had envisaged for Van Riebeeck. With his back to the shoreline and his left fist clenched in an expression of determination, he stands gazing upon Table Mountain as if asserting his claim to the land.⁷⁴ The identity of the claimant, in this instance, was very clear: it was Cecil

⁷²R van Luttervelt, 'Het Uiterlijk van Jan van Riebeeck in de Volksverbeelding', *Nederlandse Post*, 15 March 1952, pp.2-4; *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, 6, 4 (June 1952), p.108.

⁷³Ross ('Tragedy of Manners', p.89) speculates that this was the reason that Harry Smith did not accord Van Riebeeck a public holiday in 1852.

⁷⁴Van Luttervelt, 'Het uiterlijk van Jan van Riebeeck', p.4. In the account of the Russian captain, Vasilii Mikhailovich Golovin, whose ship *Diana* was detained by the British authorities in Simon's Town between 1808 and 1809, there is mention of a statue of Van Riebeeck at the Town House in Cape Town. This, however,

John Rhodes, the major proponent of British imperial ambitions in southern Africa in the late nineteenth century. Rhodes was very insistent that it was to be his name and not the Scottish sculptor's, John Tweed, which would appear on the final product. Tweed was very much under Rhodes's patronage. He had been a relatively unknown sculptor brought out from Paris to sculpt the gable above Rhodes' residence, Groote Schuur, as a scene depicting the landing of Van Riebeeck, an event which for Rhodes evidently marked the advent of his imperial aspirations.⁷⁵ When the Van Riebeeck statue was unveiled by the mayor of Cape Town in May 1899, Rhodes was absent in London, but his presence almost dominated the proceedings under gloriously blue skies which had cleared, seemingly miraculously (as in 1752), after days of incessant rain. The mayor of Cape Town was at pains to link the two "pioneers" of the colony, Rhodes and Van Riebeeck, who had "established effective government and introduced practical civilisation and the blessings of Christianity into this portion of the vast continent of Africa". Van Riebeeck even became the "Dutch Governor ... who came and laid the foundations of the [British] colony", and the crowd who came to pay homage to him in 1899 were doing so "as citizens and also members of that great body, the English nation; they were there as free bodies of that great Empire to which they were all proud to belong...".⁷⁶

By the end of the nineteenth century Van Riebeeck had emerged and grown as a public historical figure, taking his place in a variety of ceremonial activities. This was clearly associated with the positioning and extension of colonial settlement in southern Africa.

appears to be an incorrect translation and presumably refers to a portrait of Van Riebeeck that was displayed in the Town House. V M Golovnin, *Detained in Simon's Bay: The Story of the Detention of the Imperial Sloop Diana April 1808-May 1809*, translated by L Millner, edited by O H Spohr, Friends of the South African Library, Cape Town (1964), p.37.

⁷⁵A Crump and R van Niekerk, *Public Sculptures and Reliefs in Cape Town*, Cape Town (1988), p.22. Tweed was also engaged by Rhodes to do a bronze statue of the poet Burns at Groote Schuur and brass reliefs for the Wilson memorial in Zimbabwe, *Cape Times*, 13 May 1899.

⁷⁶*Cape Times*, 19 May 1899. Vivian Bickford-Smith (*Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town*, Johannesburg (1995), p.139) suggests that the statue was donated by Rhodes as a token of rapprochement between English and Dutch speakers. What he ignores are the British imperial associations that the image of Van Riebeeck had begun to assume in the nineteenth century and that it cannot be taken as given that he was a symbol of reverence for Dutch speakers. The association between Rhodes and Van Riebeeck was again highlighted in 1902 when Rhodes died. Suggestions were made that a statue of Rhodes be built at the entrance to the Company Gardens, at the opposite end of Adderley Street, so that he could be directly facing "the statue of Mr. Van Riebeeck, the last gift of Mr. Rhodes" (*Cape Times*, 1 April 1902). See also the editorial in the *Cape Times*, 5 April 1902.

Although previous versions of his past were incorporated into this newly found historicity, he was now appropriated as the first settler of the colony, the first Christian and the first colonial oppressor. In the early part of the twentieth century these identities were to be accentuated and incorporated into different forms as, in a series of commemorative performances, Van Riebeeck assumed an even higher profile in History.

His first major appearance in the twentieth century was during the pageant organised to commemorate the opening of the first parliament of the Union of South Africa in October 1910. The pageant was designed to establish South Africa as "A New Country", with a history that set up the colonial enterprise as the central motor and binding force of the past.⁷⁷ Performed at Green Point, Cape Town, in almost perfect weather - the south-east wind which had been howling for almost all of October had suddenly dropped (another moment of divine intervention, following on 1752 and 1899?) - the pageant, presented in tableau form over two days, told a story which moved from the days of "Primordial Savagery" in the mid-fifteenth century to its 'defeat' in the "Grand Finale" in 1910.⁷⁸ In between came selected moments in which the notion of a common progression towards this 'development' obliterated all divisions and struggles within the settler communities over the nature and form of their colonial (and anti-colonial) identities. All were now conceptualised as fellow colonialists who had a "people's patriotism" and who had fought together for the "love of country".⁷⁹ In their "life-blood", as if history had some inherited immutable genetic component, was the "Pacification of the Natives", the "Great Trek" which showed "the efforts of the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Natal to develop the country" with "the Bible in one hand, the rifle in the other" and the 1848 "opposition of the colonists to the establishment of a penal settlement in South Africa". Between 1854 and 1910, when the conflicts within the settler communities were at their sharpest and most brutal there was no history and a single tableau represented the period as "the vanquishing of savagery in South Africa by civilisation and the evolution and

⁷⁷*Cape Argus Union Jubilee Supplement*, 28 May 1960, p.3.

⁷⁸G H Wilson, *Gone Down the Years*, London (1948), p.205; *The Pageant of South Africa*, October 1910 (Brochure), South African Library (hereafter SAL), EMC Loopuyt Collection, (hereafter EMC), MSB 573.

⁷⁹*Cape Argus Union Jubilee Supplement*, 28 May 1960, p.13.

development of the Nation's social and commercial conditions".⁸⁰ A group of 500 "silver-clad little boys and girls" sang specially composed songs and "waving branches of silver leaves, ... chased the drear, dark spirits of barbarism from the land". It was this process of conquest, cast as one of cleansing, which then cleared the way for the unity of colonial settlement, a young woman dressed in white and labelled the "Spirit of Union". As an emblem of colonial unity she carried in her right hand a shield bearing the emblem of the pageant, a swastika, which the souvenir program defined as a "mystic diagram of good augury" and "the religious symbol used by early Aryan races".⁸¹

Van Riebeeck's fit into this colonial unity was simultaneously one which was most difficult and yet also very easy. On the one hand it was his association with a Dutch identity, which had been defined largely through invoking the claim that he was the bearer of Christianity to South Africa, that was problematic. Such an identity was difficult to sustain in a commemoration which sought to establish a common sense of colonial identity, especially since a little less than a decade previously, during the South African War of 1899-1902, the British forces had been ranged up against an army, most of whom, although they might not have identified themselves as such, largely spoke some form of Dutch. Hence, it was the more 'neutral' figures of the Portuguese explorers, Bartholomew Diaz and Vasco da Gama, who, in the pageant, began the process of marking and naming that ultimately led to colonisation and who "with flashing spears and flashing armour" planted "the first emblem of Christianity ... on South African soil".⁸² But Van Riebeeck's past could also fit into this 'new South Africa'. His role in the pageant was twofold. Firstly he was identified in terms of a component of the colonial population of South Africa as being the ancestor of Dutch speaking South Africans. It was this "new race" which the pageant classified as having arrived in South Africa with the landing of Van Riebeeck and "the Dutch pioneers".⁸³ At the same time Van Riebeeck was also able to assert an identity which was more in line with the image he had

⁸⁰*The Pageant of South Africa*, October 1910 (Brochure); *Cape Times*, 29 October 1910; *Cape Argus Union Jubilee Supplement*, 28 May 1960, p.13.

⁸¹*Cape Argus Union Jubilee Supplement*, 28 May 1960, p.13.

⁸²*Cape Times*, 31 October 1910.

⁸³*Cape Times*, 29 October 1910.

presented in the Bell painting and the statue in Adderley street. "The coming of Van Riebeeck", together with his "bearded mariners", was portrayed as "[t]he first colonisation of the Cape".⁸⁴ Although he did not literally take to the sea again, he did arrive on board a reconstructed Italian ship dressed up, for the pageant, as the Dromedaris.⁸⁵ In such a pose Van Riebeeck was not accorded the pole position in South African history, but of very specific processes which were attuned to the broad frameworks of a 'new history' and situated in time between "the days of the Portuguese" and "the British period" and spatially located at the Cape, rather than 'South Africa'. Nevertheless, Van Riebeeck's landing was being marked as a 'crucial' moment in this past and astonishingly this led to a regeneration in his form as, alongside the "Girl in White", he shed some 260 years to become an emblem of new beginning in a country that now labelled itself South Africa. He started prancing about on his pedestal, wielding his walking stick like a baton, and exclaiming to surprised onlookers, "'*Allemagtig!* [Good God!] I feel quite young again!'" (see illustration 1).⁸⁶

Yet, when it came to setting down a list of public holidays for "The New South Africa",⁸⁷ Van Riebeeck was not even considered. The basic principles underlying the listing of holidays were that they were to order the Union into contemporary as well as commemorative time. Contemporary time involved the issue of spacing the working year into manageable units, entering into a discourse that revolved around concepts such as production, productivity, prolonged and spasmodic holidays and "the wealth of the country". In the course of discussion around spacing the year, the King's Birthday, for instance, was moved to August as there were too many holidays that would interrupt production in April and May.⁸⁸ Commemorative time, as with specific celebrations, involves placing individual temporality within a framework

⁸⁴*The Pageant of South Africa*, October 1910 (Brochure); *Cape Argus Union Jubilee Supplement*, 28 May 1960, p.13

⁸⁵Ino, 'Veertigduisend Toeskouers by Eerste Uniedag-Fees', *Die Burger*, 3 June 1950.

⁸⁶*Cape Argus Union Jubilee Supplement*, 28 May 1960, p.13; *Cape Argus Weekly Edition*, 2 November 1910.

⁸⁷*Cape Argus*, 1 November 1910.

⁸⁸Parliamentary Hansard: Debates of the First Session of the First Parliament of the House of Assembly, 31 October 1910 - 25 April 1911, pp.67, 71, 131-2. In addition to Union Day and Victoria Day there were Good Friday, Easter Monday and Ascension Day.

STATUE OF VAN RIEBEECK: ALLEMACHTIG! I FEEL QUITE YOUNG AGAIN!



Figure 1: "Allemagtig! I Feel Quite Young Again", *Cape Argus*, Weekly Edition, 10 October 1910.

set by what are determined as societal moments of historical import. Affirming South Africa as a union with a colonial heritage was the guiding principle for setting commemorative time in November 1910. 31 May, the day union was declared, became Union Day, 24 May was Victoria Day, bearing the "name of the Sovereign who reigned over the Empire when it went through its greatest crisis", and 16 December was commemorated as a day of "national significance" to recall the victory of a group of trekkers who had left the Cape over a section of the Zulu army at the Battle of Blood River in 1838. The name that this latter day took was not one associated with trekker identity, but with the Zulu king at the time of the battle, Dingaan. This was not because the day eulogised Dingaan in any way, but because the defeat of the Zulu army was conceptualised as a victory of the forces of colonialism and "civilisation over barbarism and heathenism", ⁸⁹ a motif that had been central to the pageant which had taken place a few days before the Public Holidays Act was passed in November 1910. For Van Riebeeck though, who occupied a somewhat uneasy position within commemorative time and whose landing in April would have made the early part of the year even more 'unproductive', there was no space on the calendar.

In fact, during the next decade, Van Riebeeck hardly featured in South Africa's commemorative past. His statue in Adderley Street was so neglected that it took on a "green and grimy" appearance.⁹⁰ It would seem that the only attempt to pattern a semblance of a memorial out of Van Riebeeck's landing was from the *Algemeen Nederlands Verbond* (ANV). Initially established in 1895 in Brussels, the ANV sought to establish a cultural heritage which linked those people in a greater 'Dutch world' that were identified (or identified themselves) as having "*Neerlands bloed*" [Dutch blood].⁹¹ To promote the "*Hollandse Taal*", "*Hollandse Zang*", "*Hollandse voordracht en muziek*" [Dutch language, Dutch song, Dutch costumes and music], the ANV arranged concerts, held lectures and distributed reading material at its

⁸⁹House of Assembly Debates, 31 October 1910 - 25 April 1911, pp. 67, 132. Dingaan's Day had first become a public holiday in the Transvaal in the 1860s, but had been specifically promoted by the Afrikaner nationalist historian, Gustav Preller, in the period after the South African War of 1899-1902, see I Hofmeyr, 'Popularizing History: The Case of Gustav Preller', *Journal of African History*, 29 (1988), p.527.

⁹⁰*Cape Times*, 8 April 1921.

⁹¹O Dentz, *Geschiedenis Van het Algemeen Nederlands Verbond in Zuid-Afrika en in het Bijzonder van de Afdeling Kaapstad van 1908-1953*, Cape Town (1953), p.5.

various branches.⁹² Although it was founded in Belgium, the biggest branches of the ANV were in southern Africa, where the organisation had flourished on the Witwatersrand on the eve of the South African War. After the war it was resuscitated, particularly in the Cape, where the biggest and main branch of the organisation was set up in 1908. A central moving force behind the revival of the ANV and its shifting focus to the Cape was the principal of Stellenbosch University and Van Riebeeck's biographer, Prof. Dr E C Godee Molsbergen. Molsbergen was a strong proponent of the concept of a greater Netherlands which would embrace Africa, Holland and Flanders.⁹³ He lauded the pioneers of Dutch colonisation - Peter Stuyvesant in North America, Jan Pieterzoon Coen in the East Indies and Van Riebeeck in Africa.⁹⁴ With his guidance the ANV played a major role in promoting Van Riebeeck as a key initiator of this greater Dutch identity, and in April 1918, held a lecture and musical program to honour "*de komst van Jan van Riebeeck aan de Kaap in 1652*" [the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape] and thereby form a "*band tussen het ANV en van Riebeeck*" [link between the ANV and Van Riebeeck].⁹⁵

But this link went further, for in the ceremony in 1918 what was also starting to emerge, albeit very tentatively, was a connection between those who identified themselves as part of a nation built out of a language constructed as Afrikaans⁹⁶ and those claiming a Dutch heritage. In its past this Afrikaner nationalism had relied upon a sense of 'independence', of 'breaking away' to lay the foundations of a 'new nation'. Taken as key moments in this History were the series of events turned into a journey of predestination and labelled the Great Trek, and the struggles of the settlers against the officials of the Dutch East India Company

⁹²Dentz, *Geschiedenis Van het Algemeen Nederlands Verbond*, p.4.

⁹³Dentz, *Geschiedenis Van het Algemeen Nederlands Verbond*, pp.3, 5.

⁹⁴E C Godee Molsbergen, *De Stichter Van Hollands Zuid-Afrika Jan Van Riebeeck 1618-1677*, Amsterdam (1912), p.3. Presumably Molsbergen had little hope that, by this time, either North America or the East Indies could be incorporated into this greater Dutch cultural world.

⁹⁵Dentz, *Geschiedenis Van het Algemeen Nederlands Verbond*, p.24; *Cape Argus*, 8 April 1921.

⁹⁶I Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity' in S Marks and S Trapido (eds), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, London (1987), pp.95-123.

in the 18th century.⁹⁷ Establishing a European, and specifically a Dutch, ancestry had little to do with a sense of nation. In the twentieth century this sense of national identity, based upon a localised concept of 'independence', began to shift and started to incorporate a sense of heritage. To broaden its appeal, the notion of being an Afrikaner became simultaneously more inclusive and exclusive, incorporating a racial element of European ancestry and barring those who were 'non-European'. This had not yet taken the form of Holland becoming the '*stamland*' [land of origin] of the 'Afrikaner nation' but it was F W Reitz, the old president of the Boer Republic of Orange Free State - a "*Republikein in zijn hart*" [a Republican at heart] - who was the keynote speaker on the occasion to commemorate Van Riebeeck's landing in 1918. In previous ANV meetings he had been insistent upon telling his audiences about the way that the Dutch had assisted Boer armies during the South African War, clearly demarcating the Boers as Afrikaners and the Dutch as fraternal allies, and heaping inordinate amounts of praise on the Dutch royal house. This time, to coincide with the commemorative event, he delivered an oration in honour of Van Riebeeck, which the ANV yearly report described as "*leerzame en belangwekkende*" [instructive and interesting].⁹⁸ Van Riebeeck was once again reiterating his claim as a Dutch ancestor, although this time he was starting to find a new group of descendants.

This association between Van Riebeeck and elements within Afrikaner nationalist thought became even more prominent as the commemoration of the landing became an annual public ceremony in the 1920s. In 1921 the ANV applied successfully to the Cape Town City Council to hold a wreath laying ceremony at the statue in Adderley Street on 7 April. Among the large crowd in attendance were the mayor of Cape Town, several government ministers, representatives of the Cape Provincial administration and K M Jeffreys of the Van Riebeeck Society, an organisation formed in 1918 to publish documents "relating to the history of South Africa" that were "rare and valuable".⁹⁹ Using the entry in Van Riebeeck's diary on 6 April

⁹⁷See I Hofmeyr, 'Popularizing History' and A du Toit, '*Hendrik Bibault of Die Raaisel van Prof. J.L.M. Franken ofte wel Enkele Filosofiese Vrae en Refleksies oor die Afrikaanse Geskiedskrywing*', Afrikaanse Geskiedskrywing en Letterkunde - Verlede, Hede en Toekoms, University of the Western Cape, 17-18 October 1991.

⁹⁸Dentz, *Geschiedenis Van het Algemeen Nederlands Verbond*, pp.6, 24.

⁹⁹*Cape Times*, 8 April 1921; F Bradlow, *The Van Riebeeck Society 1918 - 1978*, Cape Town (1978), p.4.

1654 to give the ceremony an historical basis and a 'tradition' - fulfilling "his" supposed wish that "the day of his landing ... be *for ever* held in grateful remembrance" - homage was paid to the different forms of Van Riebeeck.¹⁰⁰ He was embraced as the "First settler, though of Dutch race", "the Almighty Dutchman", "one of the most remarkable pioneers of civilisation in history" and as "*die stigter van die groot nasie van Suid-Afrika*" [founder of the great South African nation].¹⁰¹ The last acquisition was a very recent one and significantly it was this aspect of the ceremonial orations which was emphasised in the Afrikaans press as it sought to indigenise the colonial settlement.

This new indigenous form of Van Riebeeck increasingly came to the fore at the wreath laying ceremonies organised by the ANV over the next few years. He was given the title '*volksplanter*' [literally = nation planter] who began the process of colonial expansion to the interior, thereby asserting his position in Cape Town as the start, rather than the force against, the 'Great Trek'. In this newly found attire Van Riebeeck was domesticated into an example of a "*getroude man*" whose "*huwelikslewe was gelukkig en geseend*" [married/honorable man whose married life was happy and blessed]. This shift of focus from the event of the landing to the human characteristics of 'the founder' was significant as it now started to inscribe upon his way of life values associated with South Africa as 'home'. The 'home' had a dual meaning: it was both a location of colonial settlement and within that a domesticity that gendered the colonial settler, Jan van Riebeeck, as a 'married man' and Maria as '*sy vrou*' [his wife] who created a "*voorbeeldiger huwelikslewens*" [exemplary marriage].¹⁰²

As Van Riebeeck started 'coming home', more calls were made to locate the landing within national commemorative time and turn its annual anniversary into a public holiday. In 1925 the ANV submitted a proposal to the parliamentary select committee which was considering amendments to the Public Holidays Act to institute a Founders Day to recall "the day on which the first pioneer of European civilisation set foot on South African soil and established the permanent European settlement here." It was on his foundations that, the ANV claimed,

¹⁰⁰*Cape Argus*, 8 April 1921.

¹⁰¹*Cape Times*, 7 April 1921; *Cape Argus*, 6 April 1921; *Die Burger*, 8 April 1921.

¹⁰²*Die Burger*, 7 April 1922.

South Africa "was building". Teachers would be called upon to instruct their students as to this significance in the period leading up to the public holiday.¹⁰³ This campaign also had the support of Prof S F Gie, the first Professor of South African History at Stellenbosch University and a leading proponent of Afrikaner nationalist history. His European training led him not only to adopt an almost obsessive Rankean approach to the study of history¹⁰⁴ but also to draw a distinction between anthropology, which he saw as dealing 'scientifically' with the "*ongelleterde en barbaarse mensemassas*" [illiterate and barbarian masses] and history which dealt with "*die beskaafde volke*" [the civilised nations]. Locating the Afrikaner within history meant, for him, inevitably that they were part of world that was 'civilised' and 'European' and that *volksgeskiedenis* [volks' history] was really the "*Geskiedenis van die Europese Beskawing in Suid-Afrika*" [history of European Civilisation in South Africa].¹⁰⁵ In this racially constructed notion of history Van Riebeeck and his crew were the European "*stigters van ons Suid-Afrika, die Suid-Afrika van die witman*" [founders of our South Africa, the South Africa of the white man] and the '*geboortedag*' [birthday] of South Africa was part of the "*Ontwikkelingsgeskiedenis van die Nederlandse Volk*" [Historical development of the Dutch Nation].¹⁰⁶ Gie was concerned to mark the day of landing not merely as a commemoration of an event or an individual, but the start of history itself. In the light of this signification which he accorded the event, he called for Van Riebeeck's landing to be placed on the calendar as a "*nationale feestdag*" [national festival].¹⁰⁷

With concern over contemporary time paramount - "I know of no other country in the world that is so 'holiday ridden' as South Africa", asserted the chair of the select committee investigating amendments to the public holidays act¹⁰⁸ - and in spite of support from some members of parliament, attempts to place Van Riebeeck in commemorative time fell on deaf

¹⁰³Select Committee on Amendment of Public Holidays Act, 1925, SC.10-'25.

¹⁰⁴A Grundlingh, 'Politics, Principles and Problems of a Profession: Afrikaner Historians and their Discipline, c.1920-c.1965', *Perspectives in Education*, 12, 1 (1990-1), p.9.

¹⁰⁵S F Gie, *Geskiedenis Van Suid Afrika of Ons Verlede*, Stellenbosch (1940), pp.i-ii.

¹⁰⁶S F Gie, *Geskiedenis Van Suid Afrika*, pp.51-2.

¹⁰⁷O Dentz, *Geskiedenis Van het Algemeen Nederlands Verbond*, pp.25-6.

¹⁰⁸Select Committee on Amendment of Public Holidays Act, 1925, SC.10-'25.

ears. What did occur, nonetheless, is that the distance between Van Riebeeck and the Afrikaner nationalist past tended to lessen. The outcome of this ever diminishing distance was that in 1938, when the centenary celebrations of the 'Great Trek' were arranged by the Afrikaner nationalist cultural organisation, the *Afrikaner Taal en Kultuur Vereniging* (ATKV), Van Riebeeck featured prominently. The plan for the *Eeuefees* [centenary festival] was for a series of ox-wagons from different parts of the country to travel the "*Pad van Suid-Afrika*" [Road of South Africa] to Pretoria where the foundation stone of a Voortrekker monument was to be laid.¹⁰⁹ Travelling through different towns, the *fees* drew together the white Afrikaans speaking population "stretching from the Cape to Pretoria" in what O'Meara has called "a massive cultural orgy".¹¹⁰ Local festivals were held as the ox-wagon passed through the towns, men grew beards, women donned *kappies* [bonnets] and streets were named after Voortrekker leaders.¹¹¹ The selected starting point of this trek to the north was not the eastern Cape, where most of the trek leaders had begun their journeys in the 1830s, but the base of the Van Riebeeck statue in Adderley Street, Cape Town. Whereas 100 years earlier the move northwards had spurned Van Riebeeck and his various forms, he was now incorporated into the trek as the starting point of a history predetermined by God. The two ox-wagons were starting their journey, claimed *Die Burger*, at the spot where "*Van Riebeeck byna 300 jaar gelede onder aanroeping van die Allemagtige sy volksplanting begin het*" [nearly 300 years ago, Van Riebeeck responded to God's calling and began the process of volksplanting].¹¹² All South African history was now cast as one long continuous Afrikaner trek from one *volksdaad* [volk's deed] to another. It started when Van Riebeeck landed and established "*die wieg van ons Suid-Afrikaanse beskawing*" [the cradle of our South African civilisation] at the foot of Table Mountain and reached its turning point when Sarel Cilliers made a prayer to God before the battle against a section of the Zulu army at Blood River in 1838.¹¹³ The next *volksdaad*, the trek of 1938, was to bring the history to its destination in a future, Afrikaner-led, "*blanke*

¹⁰⁹Mostert (compiler), *Gedenkboek Van Die Ossewaens*, p.110.

¹¹⁰*Cape Argus*, 8 August 1938; D O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism 1934-1948*, Johannesburg (1983), p.76.

¹¹¹Grundlingh and Sapire, 'From Feverish Festival', p.20.

¹¹²*Die Burger*, 9 August 1938.

¹¹³Mostert (compiler), *Gedenkboek Van Die Ossewaens*, pp. 116, 112.

Suid-Afrika" [white South Africa].¹¹⁴ As wreaths were laid at the base of Van Riebeeck's statue, speeches were made, bibles presented and the ox-wagon named after the trek leader Piet Retief departed for the first stage of its journey to the Castle, built between 1666 and 1705 to replace the original fort constructed by the first commander of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape. Van Riebeeck surveyed the scene in a "*kalm en bedaard*" [calm and sedate] manner, and gazed bemused over the thousands that had gathered to pay homage to him as he, somewhat surprisingly, re-emerged as the "*Volksplanter*".¹¹⁵

A direct outcome of this association between Van Riebeeck and an Afrikaner nationalist past was that Afrikaans cultural organisations started participating far more actively in the April commemorations, instructing groups of schoolchildren to learn and recite the Van Riebeeck prayer and compiling material so that a "*histories korrekte*" [historically correct] portrayal of Van Riebeeck could emerge.¹¹⁶ H B Thom, the professor of History at the University of Stellenbosch, wrote a pamphlet, which was published by the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurbewegings* FAK and the Cape Town City Council, calling for Van Riebeeck day to become one of "national commemoration". Evoking the words of his predecessor in the History Department, S F N Gie, he called upon the government to "create the opportunity for the holding of worthy and fitting commemorative functions, and at the same time perform a resounding cultural act".¹¹⁷ Although Thom's plea was not heeded, the enthusiasm within Afrikaner nationalist circles was so overwhelming that, with a large amount of assistance from the FAK, in 1940 the celebrations of the landing took place on a "grander scale", not only in Cape Town, but also in other towns and cities in South Africa.¹¹⁸ The FAK, established in 1929 by the Afrikaner Broederbond, presented itself as the umbrella and central decision-making body for over 300 Afrikaner cultural organisations. It decided upon what constituted

¹¹⁴Mostert (compiler), *Gedenkboek Van Die Ossewaens*, p.117.

¹¹⁵Mostert (compiler), *Gedenkboek Van Die Ossewaens*, pp.110-11.

¹¹⁶Minutes, meeting ANV 13 November 1939; see also minutes of 16 October and 4 December 1939, ANV Library (hereafter ANV), Van Riebeeck Day (hereafter VRD), 1938-1960 file.

¹¹⁷Thom, *Van Riebeeck Day*, Cape Town (1940/1?), p.12.

¹¹⁸'Van Riebeeck Day: Origins of Council participation', ANV, VRD file.

Afrikaner identity and sought to promote it through various media.¹¹⁹ By 1941, along with the ANV, the FAK had assumed almost total control of the arrangements for the celebrations. While representatives from the Cape Town City Council, the Dutch government, the Boy Scouts and Caledonian Society were invited guests, the proceedings were dominated by Afrikaans 'cultural bodies' who turned up in full force. These ranged from the *Hugenothe Herdekingsfeeskomitee*, to the *Wellington Kultuurvereniging*, the Voortrekker youth group and the Afrikaanse Eistedford. The ceremony itself, though, was not reduced to outpourings of Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric. Indeed, no speeches were made and the focus was on asserting a European heritage. Thus, after Van Riebeeck's pledge had been recited and the wreaths laid by all the invited organisations, it was the National Anthem of the Netherlands that was sung.¹²⁰

This increasing involvement of the FAK in the proceedings and their more popular appeal led to a great deal of friction over whom the appropriate organisers for the commemorations should be. Although the conflict that emerged was conducted mainly at the level of debate around organisational expertise and access to appropriate resources, it reflected contestation over the symbolic appropriations of Van Riebeeck's past. There was some pressure from within Afrikaner nationalist ranks for the ANV to step down completely from its role in the organisation of the commemoration because it was "*n vereniging ... waarvan die lede grootendeels uit vreemdelinge bestaan*" [an association whose membership was largely composed of foreigners].¹²¹ This was probably the clearest expression of Van Riebeeck assuming a local nationalist identity and an attempt to cast off his colonial imagery. The ANV was taken aback by this outburst in the pages of the Afrikaans magazine, *Die Huisgenoot*, and in its reply to the editor was at pains, not to place Van Riebeeck in a Dutch past, but to assert the South African Afrikaner connections of the ANV:

Meer as een-derde van die lede is seuns en dogters van Suid-Afrika wat tipies Afrikaanse familiename dra. Die orige twee-derdes bestaan vir meer as die helfte uit oud Nederlanders wat al sedert jare genaturaliseerde Unie burgers

¹¹⁹O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, pp.61, 75.

¹²⁰'Van Riebeeck Day: Origins of Council participation'; Programme Jan van Riebeeck Day Wreath Laying Ceremony, 7 April 1941, ANV, VRD file.

¹²¹*Die Huisgenoot*, 17 March 1944.

is. Party van hulle het al burgerskap verwerf in die dae van Kruger en Steyn. Manne so as President Reitz an Senator Francois Malan het in die verlede erevoorsitterskap oor ons Afdeling aanvaar. [More than a third of our members are sons and daughters of South Africa with typically Afrikaner surnames. Of the other two thirds, more than a half are old Dutch people who have been naturalised citizens of the Union for years. Some of them obtained their citizenship in the days of Kruger and Steyn. In the past, people like President Reitz and Senator Francois Malan were honorary presidents of our branch].¹²²

In addition to the problems raised over the ANV's organisational role, the FAK was also concerned about the way in which the Cape Town City Council was assuming more direction in terms of the proceedings at the statue in Adderley Street. The ceremony had taken on a very sombre character, the City Council was making its presence felt by ensuring that the organisers had to obtain permission to use the statue site and it was even rumoured that 'God Save the King' might be included in the proceedings.¹²³ The FAK, feeling that they were being manoeuvred into an inferior position with regard to Van Riebeeck, withdrew from organising the wreath-laying ceremony, labelling it as "*blote formaliteit*" [merely a formality]. Now asserting that the form of the ceremony did not matter - in any case it took place at the base of the statue of that arch-imperialist, Cecil John Rhodes - they instead arranged an evening ceremony in the Hofmeyr Hall.¹²⁴ The Cape Town City Council, realising that the ceremony at the statue was acquiring a broader public appeal among the white population of the city, stepped into the breach and from 1945 Van Riebeeck Day was "officially commemorated by the Council".¹²⁵ As the Batavian governor De Mist had done almost 150 years previously, Cape Town was re-designated as *Riebeecks stad* [Riebeeck's city], with its origins and character imaged as European.

By the mid-1940s, through these various acts of commemoration, the meaning and identity of Van Riebeeck and the landing had shifted dramatically from the days of European trade and settlement. From the 17th and 18th centuries, when the central theme had been the

¹²²Letter to the Editor of *Die Huisgenoot*, 27 March 1944, ANV, VRD file.

¹²³Letter to Mr J H Viljoen, 20 February 1948; Afskrif van brief D.P.De Klerk, 21 December 1943; Letter from Principal, Jan van Riebeeck High School to Secretary ANV, 30 March 1944, ANV, VRD file; *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 March 1944.

¹²⁴Letter to Mr J H Viljoen, 20 February 1948, ANV, VRD file; *Die Huisgenoot*, 17 March 1944.

¹²⁵'Van Riebeeck Day: Origins of Council participation', ANV, VRD file.

landing as a religious signifier of possession by Dutch East India Company, to the latter part of 19th century when Van Riebeeck as an individual was focused on as a forbearer of colonialism, he changed into a European founder of an indigent nationalism in the 20th century. This is not to argue that these images and identities merely replaced the former. Indeed, not only did the past images remain but also aspects were retained and incorporated as new identities emerged. As the three hundredth anniversary of 1652 approached, the historic times of Van Riebeeck, constructed and resurrected for collective memory through the commemorations, varied from the Christian lineage, the predestination of an Afrikaner *volk*, the ancestry of Dutch-speaking South Africans, to a legacy, or a somewhat tarnished reputation, derived from colonisation. The tercentenary festival of 1952 drew upon these pasts to construct Van Riebeeck in its own image, an image that often had to negotiate a tricky path between these historic times.

Schooling the past

It is possible to track shifting identities associated with Van Riebeeck and his landing that are similar to those established through commemorative time through an examination of school text books that were used in South Africa from the early nineteenth century to the 1940s. The Dutch ancestor, the colonial settler, the Christian bearer and the *volksplanter* are all in evidence and follow a temporal routeing that seems to follow the commemorations. This is not altogether surprising given that school texts over this period became major instruments of socialisation through attempting to establish a formal coherence, often related to a 'national past', and, by stripping history to essences, protecting the self-identified group from "cognitive chaos".¹²⁶

Yet textbooks neither merely reflect social and political circumstances, nor do they reproduce exactly the same historical meanings as the commemorations. Textbooks in themselves produce specific forms of historical knowledge that, as Olson has pointed out, can be located within a unique register where there is a specific context, a distinguishable prosaic pattern and

¹²⁶V Berghahn and H Schlusser, 'Introduction: History Textbooks and Perceptions of the Past', in V R Berghahn and H Schlusser (eds), *Perceptions of History: International Textbook Research on Britain, Germany and the United States*, Oxford (1987), pp.1, 14.

a social relationship where structures of authority are mutually reinforcing.¹²⁷ The context is nearly always the school or college classroom where, since the development of mass printing in the nineteenth century, textbooks have become the primary medium for education. It is a truism that "students' school work often begins (and in some schools ends) with the textbook".¹²⁸ If one accepts this assertion then by analysing textbooks, one can ascertain the nature and content of the knowledge "that is supposed to be transmitted in the classroom".¹²⁹ The language of textbooks is built on the premise that the questioner already knows the answer to questions s/he asks. In order to perform this function more effectively, textbooks are designed so as to clearly demarcate the 'correct answers'. There is an emphasis on providing definitions, "declarative sentences", listing, labelling and numbering points.¹³⁰ In a very real sense they are the ultimate expression of what Barthes calls a writerly text, where the reader is allowed little space for her/his own reading of the text. Textbooks "say what they mean and mean precisely, neither more nor less than, what they say".¹³¹ Finally textbooks maintain social relations of authority, in that their assertions are what Olson calls "transcendental", seemingly originating from outside the direct realm of the speaker. The teacher and the student combine in a process which repeats and reproduces the structure and content of the textbook, with the teacher quizzing the student's grasp of the assigned knowledge. This invests the words in the text with an appearance that they are beyond criticism in that they are not seen and heard as "the personal whim and limited experience of the speaker".¹³²

¹²⁷D R Olson, 'On the Language and Authority of Textbooks', *Journal of Communication*, vol 30 (1980), p.189.

¹²⁸P G Altbach and G P Kelly (eds), *Textbooks in the Third World: Policy, Content and Context*, New York and London (1988), p.3.

¹²⁹Altbach and Kelly (eds), *Textbooks in the Third World*, p.x.

¹³⁰Olson, 'On the Language', p.190.

¹³¹ Olson, 'On the Language', p.190 (emphasis in original). R Barthes, *S/Z*, Oxford (1990), originally published, Paris (1973), pp 4-6. Of course, not all textbooks can be categorised in this way, especially more recent ones which invite the reader to search for a variety of interpretations. Yet, even in these texts there is still a very strong tendency to remain bounded within a discourse of making 'simple' declarations and marking 'essential' points.

¹³²Olson, 'On the Language', p.190. Olson argues that the ability to challenge the authority of the textbooks comes from a sense of being admitted into the peer group of fellow writers.

While Olson's conceptualisation of the language and authority of textbooks is a general one it does seem to be applicable to history texts used in schools. Causal factors and outcomes are often neatly packaged into listings, giving reasons for and results of, which the student is obliged to provide in terms of answers. The central 'story of the past' is clearly demarcated and anything that might be considered extraneous, complicating or additional is either discarded or reduced to a block alongside the main text. In this form the nature of history is ultimately one of deriving essentialisms that have to be transmitted in the classroom context. The constituent parts of that 'essential knowledge' are often at the heart of struggles over what should be taught as history in schools: should it be Eurocentric or Afrocentric, should it emphasise 'content' or 'skills', should it tell about individuals or larger contexts, should it narrate a story or provide a package of sources? Although these seem to be issues of contestation, what is clear from all these sites of struggle is that there is a consensus that there is a basic or core knowledge of 'history' that must be authorised in the classroom.

One of the first history textbooks that was used in classrooms at the Cape was for school children who were schooled in Dutch. *Geschiedenis van de Kaap de Goede Hoop* [History of the Cape of Good Hope], published in 1825, was written by Joseph Suasso de Lima, a schoolmaster at the Evangelical Lutheran High School in Cape Town.¹³³ De Lima, who was of Jewish descent, had arrived in the Cape from Amsterdam, had engaged in various unsuccessful business ventures and took to teaching, translating and writing plays for the Cape Town stage. In these undertakings, particularly for his satirical writings and what were considered irreligious ideas - he once suggested that dancing be associated with prayers - he often acquired many enemies, particularly from sections of the Dutch-speaking community.¹³⁴

From the moment of its publication, De Lima's book was severely criticised. It has been called "elementary", "disjointed", "full of errors", "*eensydig*" [one-sided], "*kreupel geschrift*" [lamely written], "*beneden alle critic*" [beneath all criticism] and, rather patronisingly,

¹³³J de Lima, *Geschiedenis van de Kaap de Goede Hoop*, originally published in 1825, Cape Town (1975).

¹³⁴F C L Bosman, 'Joseph Suasso De Lima', *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol 1, HSRC, Pretoria (1967), pp.219-20; *Het Nederduits Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift*, December 1825, pp.453-4.

"quaint".¹³⁵ These critiques, while containing a large measure of validity, do not examine how De Lima's textbook embraces a certain type of knowledge of the past and turns it into history. Underlying the text is a sense of creating a local identity based upon colonial settlement embracing settlers from disparate areas of Europe. The subject characterised as the means to achieve this is history, "*een geloofwaardig verhaal van voorname gebeurtenissen*" [an authentic account of prominent events].¹³⁶ Cast as role-players, inventors and discoverers in a world of 'progress', individuals through their actions were seen as influencing the course of events. This represented a significant shift away from the educational system in the Cape in the eighteenth century, where religious instruction dominated and history hardly featured in the curriculum.¹³⁷ In De Lima's world of the early nineteenth century Cape, recently colonised by Britain, it was establishing and specifying individuals into discernible locational units that was becoming more important than imparting religious guidelines. To accomplish this transformation from sacred to secular history¹³⁸ it became crucial to import what today is specified as the subject of 'geography' into history, and for students to be able to spatially locate their individuality on a map of manageable discrete entities. De Lima's book begins with a series of questions to students where they have to pinpoint themselves on a world map. Once the text has been geographically demarcated and mapped out, individuals appear to take their role in the temporal routing of history to discover, arrive, possess and settle. After settlement it is the governors of the Cape who provide the markers of change in an extended chapter nine, covering almost three-quarters of the book, entitled "*Vervolg*" [Continuation]. "*Wie volgen hem op die bewind?*", "*Wie was zyn opvolger?*", "*Wie volgde den Heer Rhenius op?*" ["Who came to power after him?", "Who followed him?" "Who followed Rhenius?"] are the questions that De Lima poses in order to carry his narrative further.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ A Bank, 'The Great Debate and the Origins of South African Historiography', paper presented at the South African Historical Society Conference, Grahamstown, July 1995, p.2; K Smith, *The Changing Past: Trends in South African Historical Writing*, Johannesburg (1988), p.15; J C Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis Van Die Afrikaanse Literatuur*, Pretoria and Cape Town (1978), p.26; D E Smit, 'Introduction' to J de Lima, *Geschiedenis* (1975); *South African Library Reprint Bulletin*, vol xxxv, no 2 (1980).

¹³⁶ De Lima, *Geschiedenis*, p.1.

¹³⁷ Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching', p.83.

¹³⁸ I am borrowing these terms from Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, London (1994), p.6.

¹³⁹ De Lima, *Geschiedenis*, pp.8, 9, 14, 18.

De Lima places Van Riebeeck's departure from Holland to the Cape to take possession of the land in the name of the Dutch East India Company together with the landing on 6 April 1652 as the starting point of the history of the '*Vaderland*'. Although he does list other European traders who called at the Cape before 1652, he claims that they did not attempt "*om dezen uithoek te behou*" [to retain this outpost].¹⁴⁰ Clearly for De Lima, Van Riebeeck's establishment of a revictualling station signified possession in colonial terms by the 'father' of the land. "*Van dat oogenblik begint dus myns bedunkens de geschiedenis*" [From that moment, in my opinion, history begins], asserted De Lima.¹⁴¹ In the three pages of the history that follow (chapters 7, 8 and the beginning of the lengthy chapter 9) the emphasis is on Van Riebeeck's trade relations with the local inhabitants, the "*wederstand*" [resistance] to the settlement from the "*Hottentoten*", who are portrayed as being thieves and robbers, and the characterisation of Van Riebeeck as an "*eelyk*" and "*brave*" [honourable and brave] man.¹⁴² Framing these events and individual actions is once again De Lima's concern with establishing how the Cape is spatially constructed. He tells how Van Riebeeck commissioned the first map of the Cape in 1657 and continually desired to extend the boundaries of the "*kolonie*" [colony]. For De Lima the Cape had always been a bounded colony, from the time of the establishment of the revictualling station, marked off by the first governor at Riebeeck's Kasteel, "*de landstreek waar zyne eerste grenzing was*" [the area where his first border was].¹⁴³

The accuracy of this and many other of De Lima's statements might be debatable but what is clear is that his concern was with specifying local space and turning the Cape into a European place. This was a crucial component of the knowledge of history that *Geschiedenis van de Kaap* sought to impart. It was reinforced by incorporating 'lessons' in geography and civics into history. The authority was conveyed by the listings and by the question and answer format, defining historical knowledge as supplying the 'correct' answers to the questions as specified in the text. The extent to which De Lima's textbook was used and its knowledge of

¹⁴⁰De Lima, *Geschiedenis*, p.6.

¹⁴¹De Lima, *Geschiedenis*, pp.6-7.

¹⁴²De Lima, *Geschiedenis*, pp.8-9.

¹⁴³De Lima, *Geschiedenis*, pp.8-9.

'the past' transmitted in the colony beyond the classes at the Lutheran school is not known and indeed it might only have been regarded as being of curiosity value at the time.¹⁴⁴ There are indications that its use was limited as it could not be used in English medium schools and there was a great deal of disaffection with De Lima in Dutch intellectual circles. It must also be remembered that it was not until the late nineteenth century, as was also the case in Britain, that history was taught as a specific subject at schools in the Cape colony.¹⁴⁵ If, however, having access to the vast array of textbooks that have been produced subsequently, one wanted to "see progressions that didn't exist at the time",¹⁴⁶ instead of being dismissed as having "no influence on the course of South African historiography"¹⁴⁷, *Geschiedenis van de Kaap de Goede Hoop* can be viewed as the first of a kind, containing many of the features that were to characterise South African history textbooks for the next century-and-a-half: its transformation of geography and civics into history, its emphases on designating the local and the learning of predetermined answers. Moreover, Van Riebeeck appears in the past at the beginning of history, reinforcing both the temporal identity he was starting to establish in commemorative time as a figure of colonial settlement and his spatial identity at the Cape of Good Hope with its ever expanding borders.

In the fifty years following the publication of De Lima's *Geschiedenis*, history remained a peripheral subject in most schools in the Cape colony, constituting only a small part of the English language syllabus. English history from the Battle of Hastings in 1066 to the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 formed the basis of what was taught in this section of the curriculum, with the emphasis placed upon nurturing a sense of colonial loyalty. It was only in the 1870s, with increasing competition for colonial possessions among European countries, the extension of British imperial ambitions in southern Africa and the antagonisms that this aroused, that history came to be a subject that was emphasised much more in schools.¹⁴⁸ On the one hand,

¹⁴⁴G M Theal, *History of South Africa since September 1795*, vol 3, London (1908), p.402, quoted in Smith, *The Changing Past*, p.15.

¹⁴⁵Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, p.6: Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching', p.159.

¹⁴⁶V S Naipul, *A Way in the World*, London (1994), p.104.

¹⁴⁷Smith, *The Changing Past*, p.15.

¹⁴⁸Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching', p.161.

this history was one which highlighted a colonial identity, extending the previous stress on English history to incorporate loyalty and devotion to the expanding Empire. On the other hand, and seemingly in contrast to imperial history, texts were also written in a language that was somewhat hesitatingly starting to identify itself as Afrikaans - indeed, the authors of one of these texts apologised for incorrect spelling because no dictionary for this language was as yet available¹⁴⁹ - accentuating struggles for independence against colonial authorities. Yet, as will be seen below, these histories both relied upon a framework of colonial identities and had a great deal in common, especially when it came to dealing with Van Riebeeck and the landing.

The most widely used text book in the Cape Colony in the 1870s and 1880s was Alexander Wilmot's *History of the Cape Colony For Use in Schools*, published in 1871. This was a condensed version of the *History of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope*, written with John Chase, which had appeared two years before. As with De Lima, it is the concern with establishing spatial locations that frames this school text. In this case though, there is not only concern with situating 'the colony' at the Cape of Good Hope, but two-thirds of the book is devoted to the interior space of European expansion that is called 'the frontier'. These boundaries of 'the frontier', established in time and space as the key signifiers, enabled Wilmot to set up racial dichotomies of 'civilisation/savagery', with colonisation as the bearer of the former and the 'Natives', initially as "Hottentots" and then as "Kafirs", as the latter.

The stress upon the (British) colonial encounter casts Van Riebeeck not at the beginning of history but as a colonial official who was merely carrying out his job effectively. The crucial date for Wilmot is thus the one which for him denotes the beginning of governance and administration. The concept of the Cape being always/already a colony is utilised to assert that

Commander Van Riebeeck assumed the government of the embryo Colony upon the 9th of April, 1652, when he issued a proclamation as 'Senior Merchant,' taking formal possession of the country, and enacting various regulations.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹S J du Toit and C P Hooogenhout, *Die Geskiedenis van Ons Land in die Taal van Ons Volk*, Pretoria (1975) facsimile edition of original published by Die Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners, Cape Town (1877), p.ii.

¹⁵⁰A Wilmot, *History of the Cape Colony*, Cape Town (1871), p.5.

This is followed by an account of some of the "difficulties" that Van Riebeeck encountered at the Cape in effectively carrying out his administrative duties: "he had not only to provide against attacks from the natives, but to keep the servants of the Company in order".¹⁵¹ All in all the period when Van Riebeeck was governor at the Cape is portrayed as a deeply unhappy time in his life as he desperately sought to be posted elsewhere. Yet Wilmot does maintain that in spite of the "troubles" he faced, Van Riebeeck stoically carried out his orders to the letter, attending "assiduously to the interests of his employers".¹⁵² By obeying, ordering, building, arranging, systematising and proclaiming, Wilmot turned Van Riebeeck into the almost ideal (British) colonial official.

Die Geskiedenis van Ons Land in die Taal van Ons Volk [The history of Our Country in the Language of Our Volk] by S J du Toit and C P Hoogenhout, published in 1877, was explicitly written against Wilmot's imperial past as "*korrektief ... op die 'amptelike' geskiedenisboeke wat in die skole gebruik is*" [corrective to the 'official' history books that are used in schools].¹⁵³ There are clear indications though that it was not only a school text. It was produced by the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (GRA) [Fellowship of True Afrikaners], a grouping of teachers and priests in the western Cape who, in the face of apparent discrimination against them by British imperial interests, were attempting to promote a language which they were codifying as Afrikaans as a means to engender a popular indigenous nationalism in a territory encompassing the British colonies and the Boer republics, defined as 'South Africa'.¹⁵⁴ In their manifesto they distinguished themselves from 'other sorts' of Afrikaners as the only "True Afrikaners", claiming neither English nor Dutch legacy, but a separate and distinct Afrikaner lineage.¹⁵⁵ History was seen as crucial in furthering this sense of "True Afrikaners", giving them an identity with a characteristic recountable past. In *Die Patriot*, the newspaper of the GRA, it was claimed that this history was a most effective

¹⁵¹Wilmot, *History of the Cape Colony*, p.7.

¹⁵²Wilmot, *History of the Cape Colony*, p.9.

¹⁵³Kannemeyer, *Die Geskiedenis Van Literatuur*, p.59.

¹⁵⁴See Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation from Words' pp.96-9.

¹⁵⁵'Manifesto of the Genootskap Van Regte Afrikaners', quoted in Kannemeyer, *Die Geskiedenis Van Literatuur*, p.52.

way of developing nationalism as it would tighten the familial bonds of love among the *volk*.¹⁵⁶ Imparting this past was seen as a cross-generational task, but one which would begin with children, who needed to be acquainted "from their childhood of the trials and sufferings of their fathers in this land where foreigners now seek to tread us under foot".¹⁵⁷

To provide these "True Afrikaners" with a history, a new space, situated beyond the frontier, was mapped on the southern African landscape. The emphasis on 'difference' and 'independence' moved *Die Geskiedenis* outside the boundaries of the Cape colony and its imperial surrounds to encompass a territory called "South Africa". After 145 pages dealing with the periods of the Dutch East India Company and English rule at the Cape, for the next 90-odd pages it takes the reader, with the trekkers, across the borders, on "*een van die vernaamste gebeurtenisse in die geskiedenis van die kolonie onder die Engelse*" [one of the most important events in the history of the colony under the English].¹⁵⁸ It follows the "*Uitgeweke Boere*" [Refugee Farmers]¹⁵⁹ as they 'struggle', and not always with success, to establish independent republics north of the Cape Colony in Natal, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. By according a special location in the text to the latter events, it meant that they were also given their own time, which did not flow directly from the chronological sequencing of events in the Cape Colony.

The historical ancestors of the people who occupied this 'independent' space and time are established early on in *Die Geschiedenis* where the writer distinguishes between three classes of people at the Cape in the initial phases of settlement: the officials of the Dutch East India Company, the indigenous 'natives' and the group of "Free Burgers" who had either purchased or rented plots on which to farm.¹⁶⁰ The latter are identified as the 'forefathers' and they are attributed as the builders of the colony in the face of opposition from the other two classes. Du Toit's venom is particularly directed towards the employees of the Dutch East India

¹⁵⁶*Die Patriot*, 30 March 1877, quoted in Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching', p.111.

¹⁵⁷S J Du Toit, quoted in Smith, *The Changing Past*, p.60.

¹⁵⁸Du Toit, *Die Geskiedenis*, p.146.

¹⁵⁹Du Toit, *Die Geskiedenis*, p.146.

¹⁶⁰Du Toit, *Die Geskiedenis*, p.18.

Company, whom he maintains had the means to colonise but refused to do so. Instead, he claims that they were only interested in making profits for themselves and the company and not only hindered but directly opposed colonisation, oppressing "*die arme Boere*" [the poor farmers] in the process.¹⁶¹

Far from being taught in schools as a founder figure in the early Afrikaner nationalist past, Van Riebeeck's role is therefore much more ambiguous. He was, on the one hand, the "*Stigter van die Kaap Kolonie*" [Founder of the Cape Colony],¹⁶² which enabled the Boere to establish their farms, but he was also an employee of the company, which was seemingly intent on victimising the *Boere*. For all its avowed anti-imperial intentions, *Die Geskiedenis* thus relies very heavily on Wilmot's *History of Cape of Good Hope* when dealing with Van Riebeeck. As for Wilmot, the signifying date is 9 April 1652:

Die regering van Van Riebeeck aan die Kaap begin eintlik op die 9de April 1652. Want op die dag het hy een proklamatie uitgeskrewe, waarin hy besit neem van die land vir die maatschappy en een party wette vasstel. [The administration of Van Riebeeck at the Cape really begins on the 9th April 1652. Because on that day he issued a proclamation taking possession of the land in the name of the company and enacted various laws].¹⁶³

The resemblance to Wilmot's text is so apparent that one wonders whether all that the authors did was to copy the extract, modify it slightly and then translate it. Similarly, Du Toit repeats Wilmot's assertion that Van Riebeeck did not have a happy time at the Cape and that he was desperate to be sent elsewhere: "*Aan al die kante het hy moelikheid gehad. Aan die een kant moes hy oppas vir die wilde naties, en die ander kant vir syn ei'e mense*". [He had troubles from all sides. On one side he had to be wary of the wild natives and on the other side his own people.]¹⁶⁴ The final verdict on Van Riebeeck in *Die Geskiedenis* is also somewhat lukewarm. It outlines his accomplishments in the planning and construction of the settlement, and is largely derivative from Wilmot: "*Tien jaar was hy hier, van 1652 tot 1662. Toen hy hier gekom het was hier niks. Nou is hier een Kasteel, huise, tuine, en plase*". [He was here

¹⁶¹Du Toit, *Die Geskiedenis*, p.18.

¹⁶²Du Toit, *Die Geskiedenis*, p.17.

¹⁶³Du Toit, *Die Geskiedenis*, p.5.

¹⁶⁴Du Toit, *Die Geskiedenis*, p.7.

for ten years, from 1652 to 1662. When he arrived here there was nothing. Now there is a Castle, houses, gardens and farms].¹⁶⁵ Even these 'achievements' are stated rather blandly and are not tied in a direct manner to the person of Van Riebeeck. Clearly *Die Geskiedenis* did not want to diminish the 'accomplishments' of the Boers by heaping accolades on Van Riebeeck, the company official.

The essential pasts of both Wilmot's and Du Toit's textbooks were thus firmly located within an imperial framework, where Van Riebeeck appeared as little more than a competent colonial official on the landscape. This spatial mapping of his past was seemingly at variance with the ways in which he was being 'commemorated' at almost the same time, with his 'firstness' as a settler, Christian and colonial oppressor to the fore in the latter. Yet, in all these commemorative forms Van Riebeeck the colonial official was omnipresent, albeit taking different roles. What the school texts of Wilmot and Du Toit did was to give the official a basic narrative, situated in a more specific space, which was to be transmitted, memorised and tested in the classroom rather than to be remembered in the commemoration of people and events.

From the 1890s a new set of textbooks were superseding those of Wilmot and Du Toit. These were derived either from the work of the Colonial historiographer of the Cape government, George Theal, or else were written directly by him. They included: *A Short History of South Africa for the Use of Schools*, published by Darton Brothers and Walton in 1890, with an accompanying Dutch edition translated by the President of the Free State, F W Reitz; *Primer of South African History*, published by T Fisher Unwin in 1891; *Short History of South Africa and its People*, published by Maskew Miller in 1909 and arranged for school use by Thomas Young, based upon Theal's manuscripts; and *Our History in Picture*, published by Maskew Miller circa 1910, with pictures by Arthur Elliot and historical notes by Theal. These books went through many reprints and revised editions and became the basis for most South African school histories in the twentieth century. Theal also maintained that many other writers of

¹⁶⁵Du Toit, *Die Geskiedenis*, p.17.

school history texts in the 1890s and 1900s were making considerable use of his material without his permission.¹⁶⁶

According to Mulholland, Theal's textbooks were "most-eagerly awaited"¹⁶⁷ at the time since he was regarded as the pre-eminent historian of southern African, with a reputation for intensive archival research and extensive detailed historical narratives, often running into numerous volumes. The style of his histories also made them conducive to the format of textbooks. His explicit aim was to merely "state nothing but the facts" in "plain language", and often his histories were lengthy listings of events, names and places,¹⁶⁸ the very stuff of which school history textbooks, in their search for essentialisms, are made.

This concern with listing items of significance was paralleled in Theal's school texts by the specifying, naming and placing of individuals. This had been a characteristic of the previous texts referred to but Theal took this a step further by providing maps, pictures and replicas of documents. All these illustrations were offered as a means towards greater precision, to ensure that the student 'saw' the past instead of having to rely upon imagination from the printed word that both the writer and the teacher could regulate to a limited extent. With pictures this control could be increased. The dates told the students what were the most important events in Theal's South African past to be recalled, whereas the maps and pictures showed how they were to be coded, placed and stored in the visual imagination.¹⁶⁹

One of the central images which Theal wished to convey was that of clearly demarcated racial identities which could be distinguished by physical and what he called "cultural" characteristics. In his school history *Primer* he placed the inhabitants of South Africa on an evolutionary scale. At the bottom of the rung he placed the "race" whom he said "lived by

¹⁶⁶T Young and G Theal, *Korte Geskiedenis van Suid Afrika*, Maskew Miller, Cape Town (1909), frontspiece.

¹⁶⁷Mulholland, 'Evolution of History Teaching', p.169.

¹⁶⁸C Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class*, Cape Town (1988), p.18.

¹⁶⁹J Edgar, 'The Teaching of History by the Aid of Pictures', in A Elliot and G Theal, *Our History in Picture*, Cape Town (circa 1910), p.9.

hunting alone", the Bushmen. He cast them physically as "of small size, of a yellowish brown colour, very fleet of foot, and very sharp-sighted". Above them came the "Hottentots", "who had tame animals, but did not till the ground" and were, in Theal's image, "larger in size, and much less wild" than the "Bushman". On the next rung of Theal's racial evolutionary ladder came "The Bantu", who like the "Hottentots" "had tame animals", but in addition, "tilled the ground". The physical characteristics of this race, according to Theal, were that they "were larger in body than either of the others, and their colour varied from deep brown to black". Yet, despite their agricultural pursuits, Theal did not see 'the Bantu' as a 'fully cultured' 'race' as "they had no other clothing than skins of animals ... They kept no sacred days and had no churches ... They could not understand each other's languages... ". It was, by implication, the 'white race' (Theal does not define them physically) which had all these 'attributes', (presumably all 'whites' dressed in 'proper' clothes, went to church and could understand each other perfectly well), was 'fully accultured' and at the apex of Theal's racial hierarchy.¹⁷⁰

Once these 'races' had been firmly established in the introductory pages of Theal's text, they were mapped onto South Africa and its events past. The "Bushman" and the "Hottentots" were drawn as "Ancient inhabitants" of a land existing before history and the naming and locating of places, where maps showed "how little was known of South Africa when the Dutch first settled here" and the land was "*so goed as onbekend*" [as good as unknown].¹⁷¹ The 'Bantu', however, were not situated on this 'pre-historic' map, but instead were shown to be migrating southwards from Asia in a similar fashion to the Portuguese who were exploring the Atlantic coastline of Africa from the mid-fifteenth century. It is very unclear from Theal's history text books when and where this 'Bantu migration' starts and how it proceeds but he is very definite that by the time of European exploration 'the Bantu' had not reached South Africa. Theal thus not only "did more than anyone else to establish a pseudo-scientific basis for the

¹⁷⁰G Theal, *Primer of South African History*, London (1895), pp.1-3.

¹⁷¹Theal, *Primer*, p. 1; G Theal, *Short History of South Africa for the Use in Schools*, Cape Town (1890), Map 1, between pp.12-13; Theal and Young, *Korte Geskiedenis van Suid Afrika*, p.1.

myth of the empty land",¹⁷² but he emplotted and inscribed it in the texts and the consciousness of South African school children for decades to come.

It was Theal's land, virtually devoid of historical markers, where there were 'ancient inhabitants' and 'migrating Bantu', that the Portuguese first "discovered" in the late fifteenth century, setting up crosses and naming places to signify their visits.¹⁷³ But it was not until the mid-seventeenth century that the passing visits to Theal's 'empty land' were turned into European "foundations" when the Dutch East India Company sent its representative, Jan van Riebeeck, to establish a refreshment station "on the fertile ground at the foot of Table Mountain". For Theal, the arrival of Van Riebeeck in 1652 is clearly a turning point for South Africa in terms of its encounters with his racial hierarchy of history, as it signified, for him, "the date from which the history of white people in South Africa commences". He even introduces into the South African past a priest who accompanied Van Riebeeck on his journey to the Cape, William Wylant. Theal, wanting to establish an ancestry for the 'white race', urges his readers to remember this name, "because a son of his was **the first European child born in South Africa**".¹⁷⁴

As the 'European founder', Van Riebeeck himself does not get the adulations one might have expected from Theal. He is described as "a little, active, quick-tempered man" who "remained ten years at the fort as commander" and was then transferred, after numerous requests for promotion, to India, leaving the settlement at the Cape "in a fairly prosperous condition". In-between his arrival and departure, there is a rather bland chronological narrative, which follows Van Riebeeck's journal and extracts elements which highlight building, planting, trade and conflict with the "Hottentots". This all leads to the scenario which Theal sketches on the eve of Van Riebeeck taking leave of the settlement in 1662, with "the Hottentots" no longer being any "trouble" and each ['white'] farmer having "his little farm marked out".¹⁷⁵ Theal's lukewarm description of Van Riebeeck and the events during his tenureship as governor at

¹⁷²Saunders, *The Making*, p.39.

¹⁷³Theal, *Primer*, ch.2.

¹⁷⁴Theal, *Primer*, p.8 (emphasis in original).

¹⁷⁵Theal, *Primer*, pp.8, 16; Theal, *Short History*, pp.30, 31, 233.

the Cape can probably be accounted for in terms of his attempts to write 'white' history, which probably made him sensitive to emergent Afrikaner nationalist versions of the past, where the role of the Company officials was often harshly criticised and the exploits of the independent groupings of 'European' farmers was highlighted. In this respect it is interesting that Theal follows Du Toit's *Geskiedenis* and calls the farmers who established plots along the Liesbeeck river in 1657 "**the first real South African colonists**".¹⁷⁶ These seemingly contradictory forces were then situated within Theal's particular brand of the past, where 'telling' of 'the facts' was central - a trend accentuated by the form of the school textbook - to produce a negotiated Van Riebeeck for school children who would be the bearer of whiteness, a 'builder' of the colony, but no more than an adequate official.

Although Theal dominated the South African textbook market, his work and its pre-eminence was challenged by Dorothea Fairbridge's *History of South Africa*, published in 1917 by Oxford University Press. Like Theal's school books, Fairbridge's *History* was extremely popular and went into numerous reprints.¹⁷⁷ Fairbridge was a prolific writer whose field extended beyond the narrow realm which Theal would have defined as history, ie the collection and narration of 'facts'. In addition to the *History*, she wrote five novels, books dealing with "old Cape culture", travelogues and edited diaries and letters. She was also a regular contributor to *The State*, a magazine that promoted the Union of South Africa, debated its symbolic forms and appropriations and "was devoted to the overnight construction of a new ameliorative South African identity that would permit reconciliation between the English and the Afrikaners".¹⁷⁸

It was this interest in establishing colonial unity as part of the British Empire that was the thread which ran through nearly all of Fairbridge's writings, and her *History* in particular. The constituent parts of Fairbridge's South Africa are seemingly very similar to those advocated by Theal, with phenological descriptions being attributed to her racial categories of

¹⁷⁶G Theal, *Primer*, p.13 (emphasis in original).

¹⁷⁷Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching', p.211.

¹⁷⁸P Merrington, 'Pageantry and Primitivism: Dorothea Fairbridge and the "Aesthetics of Union"', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21, 4 (December 1995), pp.643, 654.

"Bushmen", "Hottentots" and "Bantu". Although she gives the "Bantu" more land than Theal had accorded them, the idea of a vast uninhabited interior before the advent of the Europeans is still pivotal. And it is these Europeans who are depicted as the bearers of 'civilisation'. Although there were "inevitable" clashes "[w]hen the forces of civilization c[a]me into contact with those of the primitive races", it is these 'civilized' forces who ultimately (and also inevitably?) triumph in Fairbridge's predetermined past and are carried through the narrative "to see the work of Union carried to its completion".¹⁷⁹

Yet, for all its apparent similarities with Theal's school textbooks, there is a marked difference between her *History* and Theal's *Primer* and *Short History*. This was in part a result of personal animosity between the two - Fairbridge was assisted in her historical endeavours by Hendrik Carel Vos Leibrandt, who had been appointed, above Theal and much to his chagrin, as Keeper of the Archives in 1880 - and also her approach to the writing of history.¹⁸⁰ Theal, as was noted above, wrote history in a chronological sequence, providing 'facts' along a linear, systematically arranged, horizontal axis. Fairbridge, on the other hand, was much more interested in the symbolism of events, persons and images of the past. In this model of history time was not conceived of purely in the progression that Theal advanced but as selected moments which emphasised significance and the subjective experience. Thus, instead of 'telling the past' as a listing, an approach that dominates most school texts, Fairbridge's *History* was told as a 'story'. Historical personages along the 'progression of time' were given characters and personalities, gardens and buildings were imbued with meaning and events were described in graphic detail. It was the symbolism rather than 'the facts' which comprised the essential details of Fairbridge's past for school children.

Fairbridge's symbolic past was organised in the Union of South Africa which, in turn, was located in the British imperial world. Individuals were agents of the past and were measured in terms of their effectiveness in carrying out a predetermined imperial mission. The person who was at the apex of Fairbridge's imperial hierarchy was Cecil John Rhodes, who, from

¹⁷⁹Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, pp.133, 312.

¹⁸⁰The discussion on the writing of Fairbridge which follows is derived and adapted from Merrington, 'Pageantry and Primitivism', pp.647-9.

the age of eighteen, "dedicated his life" to the "service" of "Empire and of united South Africa". The story of his life was compared to the mythical tale of Dick Whittington, a poor boy who was predestined to become Lord Mayor of London, and that of the biblical character Moses, who saw the Promised Land - "a fusion of the great white races of South Africa" - in a distant vision but never entered it.¹⁸¹

If, for Fairbridge, it was Rhodes whose "vision" and "greatness of soul"¹⁸² had brought South Africa to the verge of Union under the British flag, it was Jan van Riebeeck who started the process of imperial unity in the *History of South Africa*. This was very similar to the way Rhodes himself had conceptualised Van Riebeeck when he commissioned the statue in Adderley Street, Cape Town, in 1896. Fairbridge heaped inordinate amounts of praise on Van Riebeeck, certainly far in excess of any of the textbooks previously mentioned. He is described as "a man of indomitable courage and great resource and perseverance" who with his "great qualities" "set a fine example". The focus of the section dealing with Van Riebeeck is on the development of the company gardens to supply the passing ships and the construction of a Great Barn (Groote Schuur) as a granary. Both of these are used as emblems to link Van Riebeeck with the coming of Union, supplying a metaphor where the germination and growth from seeds planted in the soil parallels the coming of Union. "[T]he Union of South Africa has grown from the little vegetable garden of Jan van Riebeeck". A little later the Great Barn is used to symbolise solid beginnings, and disregarding chronological forms, symbolically links Van Riebeeck, Rhodes and the Union. "On foundations of van Riebeeck's barn two centuries and a half later another great South African [Rhodes] built the house which he left as the residence of the Premier of United South Africa".¹⁸³

¹⁸¹Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, pp.263-5, 297.

¹⁸²Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, p.297.

¹⁸³Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, pp.35-9. The association between Van Riebeeck, gardens and imperial unity is more fully developed in D Fairbridge, *Gardens of South Africa*, Cape Town (1924). Fairbridge presents the scene of Jan van Riebeeck plucking the first oranges planted in the Company gardens and then comments, wistfully: "If he could but stand in Covent Garden market [London] to-day and see the place lighted up with the golden oranges and naartjes of South Africa. Perhaps he does see them. Who knows?" (p.7). For a similar association, but with the emphasis placed on a European past, see the foreword by R H Compton, the Director of the National Botanic Gardens, Kirstenbosch, to M C Karstens, *The Old Company's Garden at the Cape and its Superintendents*, Maskew Miller, Cape Town (1951), p.ix. The opening sentence of the foreword reads: "The history of the Europeans in South Africa begins with a Garden". The frontispiece of this book is a portrait of Van Riebeeck.

Importantly, it is Van Riebeeck as an individual that is being emphasised here as the builder of foundations and the first coloniser. There is no mention at all in the chapter dealing with Van Riebeeck of the members of the independent farming community which developed after 1657, which both Du Toit and Theal had labelled as the first colonisers. When the chapter concludes with Van Riebeeck's departure, no reference is made of his 'eagerness' to take up another posting and he is eulogised for his 'achievements', "infinite courage, self-sacrifice and determination."¹⁸⁴ It is the 'imperial agent', in this case dressed as the highly effective 'company servant' who is decisive in Fairbridge's world, where loyalty to the "Motherland in the North Sea" matters most of all.¹⁸⁵

Fairbridge's textbook is also notable for the much more substantial appearance of Maria De La Quellerie, sometimes termed 'Van Riebeeck's wife'. In both De Lima and Wilmot she is not even mentioned, neither in name nor even as a 'wife'. Du Toit passingly refers to "*sy vrou*" [his wife] in connection with outbreaks of disease at the settlement, while in Theal's *Primer* it is remarked upon that Van Riebeeck "had his family with him".¹⁸⁶ In *Our History in Picture*, an illustration of Maria is provided with the title, "Portrait of the wife of Jan van Riebeeck", but, whereas the other pictures have historical notes by Theal, no text appears for this one.¹⁸⁷ Fairbridge's entry on Maria, although it is very brief, says much more than any of the above textbooks. Like most of the characters that appear in Fairbridge's past, Maria has been given iconic qualities.

His wife, Maria de Quellerie, was a daughter of Minister Gaasbeeck of Rotterdam, and she displayed a serene endurance of peril and discomfort which must have been of infinite assistance to her husband.¹⁸⁸

This short 'portrait' is placed towards the end of a lengthy paragraph that praises the "qualities" of Jan as a "good all-round man" and located chronologically between the departure from Holland at the end of 1651 and the arrival at the Cape in April 1652. In a text

¹⁸⁴Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, p.40.

¹⁸⁵Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, p.vii.

¹⁸⁶ Du Toit, *Die Geskiedenis*, p.6; Theal, *Primer*, p.8.

¹⁸⁷Elliot and Theal, *Our History in Picture*, p.16.

¹⁸⁸Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, p.25.

that is littered with descriptions and illustrations of imperious men, from Van Riebeeck through to Harry Smith and Cecil John Rhodes, who are 'conquering' and 'civilising' on the road to Union, this entry seems to be a little out of place. The only other woman of whom there is a lengthy account is Lady Anne Barnard, who accompanied the Colonial Secretary, Andrew Barnard, to the Cape in the late 1790s. In editing a selected collection of Lady Anne Barnard's correspondence in 1924, Fairbridge praised these letters as being the result of endeavours of someone who employed a "brilliant pen".¹⁸⁹ In the *History*, published seven years earlier, Lady Anne Barnard is described as "a woman of great charm" and Fairbridge situates her within the symbolic narrative of progression towards Union by remarking on the parties that she gave in the Castle "in the hope of drawing the two [white] races together".¹⁹⁰ From comparing these entries and looking at their textual location, it is difficult to draw any substantial conclusions about the symbolic representation of women in Fairbridge's past. Clearly, there are some women in this past and in the future of the Union, who have played important roles and will continue to do so. The specific nature of that participation is what is difficult to define, and I would suggest that perhaps Fairbridge is struggling to define it herself. On one level it seems that the two women she chooses to highlight are very similar in as much as they portray the function of white women as one of assistance, in any way possible, with what is perceived as a 'manly task' of bringing about Union. Maria does this by 'enduring' and Lady Anne Barnard by hosting parties. Yet, Lady Anne Barnard is also portrayed as being someone who was "brilliant", who wrote with "infinite candour" and "had keen powers of observation".¹⁹¹ In this light Maria de la Quellerie pales a little by comparison and it would seem that the role model of the 'white women' that Fairbridge prefers is located in her representation of Lady Anne Barnard. Maria de la Quellerie therefore seems to enter the textbook past as a reminder to readers that there were women in South Africa's past, that they played an important part in 'man's progress', but that this role should be carried further

¹⁸⁹Fairbridge, *Lady Anne Barnard at the Cape of Good Hope*, Oxford (1924), p.1.

¹⁹⁰Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, p.135.

¹⁹¹Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, p.135.

to enable women to become critical observers of 'man's world' - to give "an honest picture of the Cape at that time"¹⁹² - rather than to be 'enduring' appendages.

Over the following three decades, as the subject of history in South African government schools came to be shaped around notions of citizenship and the constituent and conflicting components of 'the nation', it was taught on a large scale in primary and secondary schools. There was a veritable explosion in the textbook market as school teachers began writing texts themselves, superseding in output the professional historians and the novelists who had dominated thus far. This proliferation of school history tended to take place in the context of a highly regulated system as book committees were set up in the provinces to approve or recommend certain texts and a centralised matriculation system left little room to deviate from the given syllabus.¹⁹³ The textbooks which appeared were issued with a stamp of government approval and bore titles such as *Juta's History for Matriculation Students* and *New History for Senior Certificate and Matriculation*.¹⁹⁴

The overwhelming trend in history textbooks was that they became even more essentialist, with the sometimes brutal elimination of any content that was considered extraneous to the central narrative of the past. This was partly a result of texts now being written for school children in the junior standards, where legislation prescribed history as a compulsory subject. In addition, the textbooks were addressed to teachers, a large proportion of whom had very little prior training and lacked a basic historical knowledge. They were intended for teachers "*in die goeie rigting 'n handjie te help*". [to give them assistance by steering them in the right direction].¹⁹⁵ Even if the teachers did have some historical knowledge and training, the

¹⁹²Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, p.135. Dorothy Driver has suggested that Lady Anne Barnard, like many women in the 1790s, held contradictory gender self-perceptions, often vacillating "between subject positions conventionally identified with 'activity' and 'passivity', 'masculinity' and 'femininity', 'intellect' and 'emotion', 'culture and emotion'". Fairbridge's modelling of Lady Anne Barnard seems to be based upon this contradictory positioning. D Driver, 'A Literary Appraisal' in A M Lewin Robinson (ed), *The Cape Journals of Lady Anne Barnard 1797-1798*, Cape Town (1994), pp.8-9.

¹⁹³Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching', pp.201-2.

¹⁹⁴R B Howes, *Juta's History for Matriculation Students*, Fourth Edition, Cape Town (1924); C De K Fowler and G J J Smit, *New History for Senior Certificate and Matriculation*, Cape Town (circa 1945?).

¹⁹⁵N Hofmeyr, *Kykies vir Kinders Deel 1 (tot 1806): Leesboek oor Ons Geskiedenis vir Skool en Huis*, Cape Town (1921), p.i.

textbooks were also necessary to ensure that they taught the 'correct' history for the matriculation examination. Textbooks were thus intended to provide both "Teachers and Students with what is prescribed in the new history syllabus" ¹⁹⁶ and often writers were apologetic in case their readers thought they had not achieved this. One expressed the wish that, although his text was lacking in parts, it would be of help to more than one teacher, while another, while admitting to large gaps, urged teachers to treat his book more as offering a type of "*noodshulp*" [first aid].¹⁹⁷

As more and more was excised from school textbooks to equip teachers and students with an examinable past, history became a series of listings, points and abbreviated summaries. Books were published that contained "a brief resume of the principal facts of the history of our South Africa" that were compiled "for examination purposes".¹⁹⁸ To learn about the past was turned into an ability to memorise an inventory of causes, effects, advantages, disadvantages, men and events. In the first ten pages of Juta's *History and Civics for Junior Certificate (Departmental Examination)* by Cecil Lewis, readers were provided with definitions of six terms that were used by the Dutch East India Company, three advantages of the Company and nine rules that the Company drew up for the independent burgher farmers.¹⁹⁹ *The New Matriculation History*, written by Eric Stockenstrom, catalogued eight reasons why the Company did not want to expand the settlement at the Cape of Good Hope. These lists of 'facts' and 'reasons' were complemented by names and terms that were highlighted in a bold print, giving students and teachers key words to recollect in an already abbreviated past.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶R B Howes, *Juta's History for Matriculation Students*, Preface to the First Edition, in Fourth Edition.

¹⁹⁷W Skinner, *Geskiedenislesboek vir die Laer Skool, Standerd V*, Second edition, Cape Town (1942), 'Voorwoord'; E Stockenstrom, *Beknopte Handboek in Aardrykskunde en Geskiedenis*, Standaard V111, Stellenbosch (1922), 'Voorwoord'.

¹⁹⁸E Stockenstrom, *The New Matriculation History*, Stellenbosch (1918), 'Preface'.

¹⁹⁹C Lewis, *Juta's History and Civics for Junior Certificate (Departmental) Examination, Standards V11 and V111*, Cape Town (1922), pp.1-10.

²⁰⁰Stockenstrom, *The New Matriculation History*, pp.28-9.

The 'historical basis' for these inventories, more often than not, was derived from the 'authority' in South African 'facts', George Theal. Textbook histories freely admitted that they borrowed liberally from Theal, so much so that he became the "*ou staatmaker*" [mainstay] for many of them.²⁰¹ As was seen earlier, these 'facts' were built around the concept of a white settler history as the bearer of civilisation. This provided a foundation from which history syllabi were constructed on notions of 'civilization', with a white South African past located in a broader framework of 'western progress'. The division of school history into two sections, South African and General History (or European History) reflected this tendency to establish an overall historical context of a 'civilised past' which bounded the 'white race' of South Africa. In the South African section syllabi emphasised the 'advance' of 'western civilisation' over the 'native races', while General History was about how 'civilisation' had emerged triumphant over 'barbarism' in Europe, with the latter providing the role model for the former.

The pupils may be guided, historically as well as psychologically, in the development of civilization from the Middle Ages, Renaissance and the Reformation to South Africa, where the establishment and development of Western civilization in a barbaric country will constitute the general theme.²⁰²

Although in many textbooks explicit reference to racial categorisations was being omitted and replaced with terms which denoted a more 'neutral' 'civilised' history, the story of South Africa's past in schools became one which was aptly titled "The White Man and the Sea".²⁰³

It was particularly, but not exclusively, in textbooks that were written in Afrikaans that this theme of the development of 'western civilisation' became apparent. As was seen in the commemorations of the 1920s and '30s, the political movement associated with Afrikaner nationalism was attempting to claim a European heritage in order to attract a broader constituency in a limited racial framework. In the context of the school text market, where certain books such as Fairbridge's were asserting an allegiance to Union as part of the British

²⁰¹Howes, *Juta's History for Matriculation Students*, Preface to the first edition; Hofmeyr, *Kykies vir Kinders*, p.ii.

²⁰²Introduction to Transvaal Education Department syllabus, Std 1-V111, Pretoria (1940), quoted in Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching', p.228.

²⁰³C D Hope, *Our Place in History: A Comparative History of South Africa in Relation to Other Countries*, Cape Town (1909), p.1.

Empire, the challenge for writers of Afrikaner nationalist history was to claim an 'independent' past in South Africa and at the same time to develop a generic racial origin which was not tied to a specific imperial loyalty. S F N Gie's *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika* [History of South Africa], which appeared in the *Voortrekkereeks Skool-handboeke* [Voortrekker Series School handbooks] in 1940, was the clearest expression of this 'independent' Afrikaner past being meshed with a European ancestry. Gie acknowledged that he largely left the 'native' out of his textbook because he wanted to emphasise that it was impossible to tell the "*Beskawing-Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika in Suid-Afrika*" [Civilized History of South Africa in South Africa] without taking into account the contact "*wat altyd bestaan het tussen die witman in sy nuwe geboorteland en die ou kultuurkringe oor die see*" [that has always existed between the white man and the old cultural circles over the sea].²⁰⁴ A reader published some twenty years earlier was even more emphatic about what it considered *Vaderlandse Geskiedenis* [History of the Fatherland]. It would not dwell on the successive "*Kaffir-oorloë*" [Kaffir Wars], where imperious characters like the British Governor Harry Smith strode heroically on the battlefields of the 'civilising' frontier, but on "*Kultuurhistorie of Beskawingsgeskiedenis, op die ontwikkelingsgang van ons Volk*" [Cultural History or The History of Civilisation, on the evolution of our Volk].²⁰⁵

The shift towards an ever-diminishing past, combined with the increasing emphasis on the development of 'western civilisation', almost obliterated 'the natives' from South African history in schools. Whereas previously textbooks such as Theal's and Fairbridge's had had introductory chapters entitled "The Ancient Inhabitants" or "The Early Inhabitants", the textbooks of the twenties, thirties and forties started with chapters which bore titles such as "The European Settlement - Result of Trade Enterprise" or "*Die Ontdekking Van Die Seeroete Na Die Ooste*" [The Discovery of the Sea Route To The East].²⁰⁶ It was now the Portuguese seafarers, Bartholomew Diaz, Vasco da Gama and Antonio d' Saldanha whose tales were recounted at the beginning of history at the end of fifteenth century. They became the

²⁰⁴Gie, *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, p.ii.

²⁰⁵H W Kammeijer and H H Van Rooyen, *Sketse Uit Die Vaderlandse Geskiedenis*, Deel 11, Bloemfontein (1924), p.v.

²⁰⁶Theal, *Primer*, p.1; Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, p.7; Lewis, *History and Civics*, p.1; Skinner, *Geskiedenislesboeke*, p.7.

discoverers who placed the Cape and South Africa in a European world and its somewhat abbreviated 'civilised' past.

The implications of this condensed past for Van Riebeeck were astonishing as he moved from an episode that appeared after a few chapters in school history to a site that was very near to its source. Soon after the Portuguese merchants he emerged, usually at the start of chapter two, in an image that saw him being installed as the man who found the land "*Woes en leeg*" [wild and empty]. The reason why the land was in this 'barren' state, according to this textbook, was not because there was no-one around but because there were "*geen witmens te sien nie*" [no white men to be seen]. Clearly without the 'white race' there was only 'barbarism' to be found in the pages of the *Leesboek oor Ons Geskiedenis* before 1652, with the local inhabitants not even accorded the status of being humans.²⁰⁷ Van Riebeeck as 'white' thus became 'the first human' to settle in South Africa, a "Founder and Builder" of 'European civilisation'. School children were told that he was "a great man" because he did more than he was "obliged to do" and thought of things that would "make life and the world better".²⁰⁸ In Afrikaans and Dutch textbooks there was a similar process. Whereas in 1916 he was not one of *Groot Mannen Van Zuid-Afrika* [Great Men of South Africa] for standard six students, by 1924 the date of Sunday 7 April 1652 was being invoked as the beginning of the past, proclaimed as the day that "*DIE STIGTER VAN SUID-AFRIKA!*" [THE FOUNDER OF SOUTH AFRICA] landed.²⁰⁹

As in Fairbridge's text, it is Van Riebeeck as an individual who comes to the fore as the shaper of the transformative process that led to an extension of the settlement in the textbooks of the 1920s and '30s.

Die oorspronklike plan van die Kompanje was om slegs 'n verversingspos aan die Kaap te stig. Van Riebeeck het spoedig ingesien dat dit nie daarby sou bly nie. Hy het van die amptenare oorgehaal om boere te word en die land te bewerk. Ons het reeds gesien hoe hy op allerhande maniere probeer het om hulle aan te moedig. [The original plan of the Company was only to establish

²⁰⁷Hofmeyr, *Kykies vir Kinders Deel 1*, p.36.

²⁰⁸Lewis, *Founders and Builders*, London (1921), p.31.

²⁰⁹W Fouche, *Groot Mannen Van Zuid-Afrika*, London (1916); Kammeijer and Van Rooyen, *Sketse*.

a refreshment station at the Cape. Van Riebeeck quickly saw to it that it would not remain like that. He convinced officials to become farmers and to work the land. We have already seen how he tried all manner of means to encourage them.]²¹⁰

Instead of being distinct and oppositional processes, the roles of the independent burgher farmers and Van Riebeeck were now being rolled into one, with both placed very near to the beginning of the past. This increased prominence of the individual as founder was reflected in the proliferation of images of Van Riebeeck and the landing in school text books. His (Rhodes's?) statue in Adderley Street, Cape Town, became the icon which adorned the front cover of textbooks and readers published by Juta and Company, photographs of his portrait were more widely used and Bell's painting of the landing was either reproduced or depicted in an illustrative format.

Yet there was still a slight hesitation in some textbooks when it came to delivering an 'historical judgement' on Van Riebeeck, with some reservations being expressed. As a representative of the Dutch East India Company, he was labelled a tricky manipulator, a "*slim*" Jan and a "Little Thornback", the implication being that he was both clever and wiley but a little 'unrefined'.²¹¹ Although he "tried to deal wisely with the free burghers", he was castigated for not encouraging colonisation "for the country needed white colonists more than anything else".²¹² It is this sense of Van Riebeeck not going far enough that seems to permeate these judgements. He is praised for accomplishing a great deal and then it is asserted that he should have had a knowledge of the future of the past, "a vision of what the Cape is like in our days".²¹³ This is a 'vision' of South Africa as being the land of the 'white man', with claims of legitimacy being based on initiating and sustaining 'civilisation'. Gie congratulates Van Riebeeck for not allowing the 'Hottentots' access to certain portions of land because, he says, they indulged in "*roofpolitiek*" [the politics of robbery].²¹⁴ This example of Van

²¹⁰Skinner, *Geskiedenislesboeke*, p.16.

²¹¹Lewis, *Founders and Builders*, pp.39-40; Howes, *Juta's History for Matriculation*, p.12.

²¹²Lewis, *Founders and Builders*, p.40.

²¹³Lewis, *Founders and Builders*, p.41.

²¹⁴Gie, *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, p.77.

Riebeeck's is, for Gie, not good enough. To promote the cause of 'white' possession he wants to extend Van Riebeeck's claim to a legal principle that

*geen indiwidu of volk 'n absoluut besitreg op die grond het. Wie iets wil bly besit, moet sy gebruik daarvan gedurig sy reg daarop handhaaf... 'n Volk is verplig om sy land so diensbaar moontlik vir mensdom te maak [no individual or nation has absolute rights to the land. If someone wants to remain in possession he must display his right through his use of the land. A nation is obliged to make as much use of his land as is possible for the service of humanity].*²¹⁵

Here 'whites' become legitimate possessors as they are portrayed as the colonisers and by extension the 'workers of the land'. Van Riebeeck, to the extent that he did not promote the colonising enterprise, is therefore not given an entirely unblemished record, but, at the same time, he is "forgiven" because "he did his very best".²¹⁶

And what about Maria? In pasts that were littered with genealogical tables, lists of summarised points and maps and charts, Maria was almost nowhere to be found. She only appears in two of the ten selected textbooks from this period. She may surface in other history textbooks, but this selection does seem to indicate that Maria was not considered to be a significant component of the selected, condensed past, extending a trend that was evident since De Lima's book in the 1820s. In the two books where she is mentioned, both are written in Afrikaans and in a narrative style that is atypical in that it is extensive and makes use of an illustrative technique using numerous examples. In Gie's *Geskiedenis*, the marriage between Jan van Riebeeck and Maria de Quellerie in 1649 is her only mention in the past, where she is described as coming from a "*goeie burgerlike familie*" [good civic family], just like Jan.²¹⁷ *Kykies Vir Kinders* by Nico Hofmeyr tells a story about the first night after landing at the Cape. In this imaginary tale Jan is feeling lonely and far away from home on a deserted west coast of Africa. Transferred for the purposes of dramatic effect from the Dromedaris to a tent on the beach, the only comfort is from "*sy goeie vrou*" [his good wife] and her child. He asks her, "*Vrou, hoe sal ons dit hier uithou?*" [Wife, how are we going to endure it here?]. There is no reply, but Jan is able to pass the night sleeping peacefully and in the morning is

²¹⁵Gie, *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, p.77.

²¹⁶Lewis, *Founders and Builders*, p.40.

²¹⁷Gie, *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, p.50.

invigorated and ready to start working. "*O, die man het ons 'n voorbeeld gegee! Hy kon werk, die Jan van Riebeeck, die dokter-soldaat*" [Oh, this man set us an example! He could work, this Jan van Riebeeck, the doctor-soldier], exclaims the story teller.²¹⁸ In these very brief encounters with Maria (in the previous example her name is not mentioned) it is Jan who is still the central figure in the past. For Gie Maria provides Jan, and the 'white race', with 'good breeding', while for Hofmeyr, she is the only comfort for Jan, both a reminder of 'home far away' and the prospect of constructing a 'new home'. Maria, in both these senses, becomes an integral component, if not a central one, of the development of a 'white nation', her role as a woman being seen as provider of 'pure blood' and a 'good home'.

On the eve of the tercentenary festival that was to celebrate his landing, Jan van Riebeeck was therefore approaching the beginning of school history texts and the 'natives' were slowly being edged out. His spatial location in the text was paralleled by his placing on a geographical mapping of the past. Initially a coloniser at the Cape, by the mid twentieth century he had started to become a figure of 'the west' in a country called South Africa. Maria was largely left out of this past, but when she did appear it was as reproducer and housekeeper of this 'nation'. This positioning of Jan and Maria in school textbooks is commonly represented as being a result of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. As it sought to gain political power through presenting its own versions of the past, it was Afrikaans historiography, with Van Riebeeck at the fore, that fed "into the school books that the great majority of literate South Africans experience".²¹⁹ Certainly this did contribute to the emergence of Jan van Riebeeck at the beginning of the past in school textbooks. But the process was far more complex as he did not always fit into an Afrikaner nationalist past, and at times a more positive image of him was projected by those texts which promoted a British imperial past and future and were in direct opposition to the Afrikaner nationalist project. Very importantly, it was the very nature of the form which school history took, its commitment to specifying spatial positions and presenting essential ingredients, stripped of complexity for both teachers and students, that

²¹⁸Hofmeyr, *Kykies Vir Kinders*, p.37.

²¹⁹B Freund, 'Past Imperfect', *Southern African Review of Books*, December 1988/January 1989, p.9.

paved the way for Jan Van Riebeeck's emergence on the introductory pages and the front covers of the textbook past and the almost total neglect of Maria.

Diarising the past

In 1921, an ex-school inspector and popular writer of historical tales in Dutch and later Afrikaans - over 100 000 copies of his *Kijkes in onze Geschiedenis* [Glimpses in our History] were published in Holland in the 1890s - Nico Hofmeyr, decided to target his stories to a younger audience, a market that had recently widened considerably with the emergence of history as a primary school subject. His *Kykies vir Kinders* [Glimpses for Children] was an attempt to move away from the conventions of school textbooks where history was constituted by lists of facts and logical conclusions, all carefully demarcated. To make history more attractive for his younger readers he decided to give 'the past' life by incorporating a personal touch into the telling of the story, embellishing historical personages with specific characteristics and adding lengthy poetic descriptions of the surrounds.²²⁰ To tell about the landing of Van Riebeeck he transfers the biblical allusion from the first chapter of the book of Genesis - "*Die aarde was woest en leeg*" [The land was desolate and empty] - onto the shores of Table Bay to depict an image of white arrival as the very start of time itself. But it is not only the created event of white founding, set amidst the rolling breakers and the majestic beauty of Table Mountain, that makes it 'historic' for Hofmeyr. It is also the start, for Hofmeyr, of the written record of the past, signifying 'real' historical evidence. The very first thing that he tells his readers about the arrival in this "*woest en leeg*" [desolate and empty] land is that Jan van Riebeeck kept a diary.²²¹

*Daarin het hy elke dag een en ander dinge opgeskrywe. Die boek kan ons tot vandag nog lees. Is dit nie 'n goeie gedagte van hom gewees nie? Ja seker : nou kan ons deur sy bril alles bekyk en met sy hart alles voel. [Every day in his diary he wrote about one thing and another. This book can still be read by us today. Wasn't this a good idea of his? For sure: now we can see everything through his eyes and feel everything with his heart.]*²²²

²²⁰Hofmeyr, *Kykies vir Kinders*, pp.i-vi.

²²¹Hofmeyr, *Kykies vir Kinders*, p.36.

²²²Hofmeyr, *Kykies vir Kinders*, p.36.

For all his literary allusions, Hofmeyr is clearly concerned to affirm a notion of history based on the written archive, where all the stories he recounts are supposedly verifiable by referring to the document of origin. Van Riebeeck's diary both begins his tale of the past and provides it with a written source that inscribes veracity and authenticity.

Nico Hofmeyr's approach to written documents in general and to Van Riebeeck's diary in particular is not one that would be followed by many historians today. They would point to other evidence, such as oral traditions and archaeological remains, as equally valuable sources of the past. Moreover, all this evidence, would not be accepted at face value, but would be cross-referenced for accuracy and placed in context to determine the subjective position of the recorder. Yet, in spite of this circumspection, diarised experiences still retain a predominant sense of conveying historical authenticity, transmitting an authoritative 'voice of the past' and credible substantiating evidence for any historical narrative. If diaries are considered contemporaneous to the events being related and analysed, their reality effect is greatly enhanced, providing historians with a veritable 'mine of information' to unearth, located at the core of the events from where the history emerges. Once discovered, substantiated and contextualised, diaries often become the very basis of history, giving it origins and a validated past, enabling historians to do what they like to do best, "begin at the beginning".²²³

If, as has been suggested, celebrations established different forms of Van Riebeeck in commemorative time before 1952, and school texts situated him in a named, abbreviated space, then the publication of the journal which diarises some of the daily occurrences when he was commander at the Cape of Good Hope gave him substantial 'authentic' evidence to become part of history. Before 1952 the journal, sometimes incomplete and at other times only featuring selected portions, was published four times. It first appeared in the 1820s, in serialised form, in the Dutch periodical *Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift*. Towards the end of the following decade the colonial official, Donald Moodie, translated and included large portions of the journal in his collection of *Official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Tribes of South Africa* which were commissioned by the governor, Benjamin D'Urban. Between 1884 and 1893, mainly using the written copy of

²²³Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, p.203.

the diary that was located in the archives at the Hague in Holland, W J Brill edited three volumes of the journal for the *Historische Genootskap van Utrecht* [Historical Society of Utrecht]. Finally, the Keeper of the Cape archives, H C V Leibrandt, published a summarised version of the journal in his *Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope* in 1897. These publications set the stage for a major debate in the 1940s, initiated by H B Thom, the professor of History at Stellenbosch University, over whether Van Riebeeck was the author of the journal as all these editions had implied. As the landing was becoming commemorated and written into the past as the beginning and a first, so through all these versions and the emergence of an historical debate around its authorship the journal was being transformed from a company record, to a bi-monthly serial and then into "the first major historical source published in the Cape Colony".²²⁴

The implication of this assertion that the journal was not always already an historical source, is that a document that is later used as historical evidence neither starts off nor automatically proceeds through life as this form. This might seem to be stating the obvious, yet in using documents in a very narrow way as 'primary sources' historians often neglect that these actually change form and sometimes the text as well in the very context of their production and re-production.²²⁵ Van Riebeeck's journal, which appeared in *Het Nederduits Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift* in 1824, was a very different document from that which appeared as an archival piece in the 1890s and later as the setting for historical debate over its authorship in the 1940s. By tracking the document that is sometimes entitled 'Van Riebeeck's journal' on its pathways into history and the realms of scholarly debate, one can begin to unravel the various ways that its meaning and its being altered, through the processes of its production, so that by the late 1940s it was well on the way to providing historical authenticity to the beginning of a South African past that starts with Van Riebeeck.

²²⁴Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, p.193.

²²⁵Premesh Lalu makes a similar point in relation to the way that Eddie Roux's *Political Biography of S P Bunting*, (Cape Town (1944)) is used as a primary source for information on the early history of the Communist Party of South Africa, with almost total disregard for the changing contexts of its production. See P Lalu, 'Lived Texts, Written Texts and Con-Texts: Eddie Roux and the Making of the South African Past', MA thesis, University of Western Cape (1994), p.84.

At all trading posts of the Dutch East India Company in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the commander was obliged to ensure that a record was kept of activities at the station and to pass this on to the Company offices in Amsterdam and Batavia. At the Cape three original copies were made of the daily record of events during Van Riebeeck's tenure as commander, which were later labelled as his diary. Two of these, as per instruction, were sent abroad, while one remained at the Cape where it was later deposited in the archives.²²⁶ In the course of time (it is unclear exactly when) 70 pages of the original document housed in Cape Town, dealing with the period December 1651 to November 1652, were lost, other pages started to crumble away and the ink began to fade. The copy that was sent to Batavia was not recovered and the one in Holland, discovered in 1853, was kept in the Dutch archives, in reasonably good condition, scattered among the collection of papers from the Cape. It was by turning these fragmented, at times barely legible, company records into a coherent, partial whole that, at various times, Van Riebeeck's diary was constituted.²²⁷

When the Dutch periodical *Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift* decided to present a serialised version of the diary to its readers in 1824 it did not have much to go on. Probably not knowing about the documents in Holland and Batavia, in all likelihood they used the manuscript in Cape Town as the basis of their work. Presumably they found the daily register amongst the official documents at the government offices in the old slave lodge at the top of Adderley Street, where they were under the jurisdiction of the Colonial Secretary, who bore the official title, "Secretary and Registrar of records".²²⁸ All government records had been transferred to this building between 1810 and 1814 after the Castle, where they had been housed previously, had become the sole preserve of the military establishment when the British assumed control of the Cape.²²⁹ As Thom points out, there is little indication of how

²²⁶Based upon the company directive that copies be forwarded to its offices, H B Thom argues that the original, from which hand-written facsimiles were made, was the one which was kept in Cape Town. Thom, 'Introduction' to *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, pp.xxvii-xxviii.

²²⁷Thom, 'Introduction', pp.xxviii-xxx.

²²⁸Thanks to Michele Pickover, the Curator of Historical Papers at William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, for this and other information relating to the collection of documents prior to the establishment of an official archive.

²²⁹C J Beyers, 'Die Huisvesting van die Kaapse Argief', *South African Archives Journal*, vol 1, no 1 (1959), p.46. The slave lodge was a two-storeyed building which housed the slaves directly in the employ of the

the editor of the *Tydschrift* actually went about the process of selection, transcription and presentation of the diary. The fact that when it was published it failed to include Van Riebeeck's journey to the Cape, indicates for Thom that, by this time, a substantial portion of the first part of the diary had already gone missing.²³⁰ Documents were not very well protected in the slave lodge cum-government offices and it was not an unusual occurrence for them to be removed, damaged and/or sold to private individuals.²³¹

Yet the decision to begin the version in the *Tydschrift* with a reference to the entry on 5 April 1652, when the land was sighted and the associated monetary reward paid out, may also reflect a conscious choice to highlight the moment of 'sighting' and 'landing' as the start of the narrative of the past.²³² The *Tydschrift* was founded by a group within the Cape Dutch intelligentsia in 1824 and edited by Rev Abraham Faure, who, as was seen earlier, played a major role in organising the 200th anniversary activities to commemorate Van Riebeeck's landing in 1852. For most of the contributors to the *Tydschrift*, who were teachers in Cape Town and more at home in print than in public displays of commemoration, the periodical became the major vehicle to promote a Cape Dutch identity with a historical and particularly spiritual basis.²³³ Articles were written which dealt with religious topics, such as ways to serve God and Christian principles, as well as with individuals and events from a Cape Dutch past from which they claimed descent. Van Riebeeck came to embody both these aspects. He became the progenitor of a constructed, unbroken lineage, whose birth was determined by an event, the moment of arrival at the Cape. In addition he was labelled "father RIEBEEK" and

Dutch East India Company as well as being used a prison and an asylum. See R Shell, *Children of Bondage: A Social History of Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838*, Johannesburg (1994), pp.172-7, 248-51. The slave lodge today houses the South African Cultural History Museum where the gravestones of Jan van Riebeeck and Maria de La Quellerie are displayed.

²³⁰Thom, 'Introduction', p.xxxiii.

²³¹The Resolutions of the Council of Policy, for instance, found their way into a private collection and were later donated to the Cape archives.

²³²*Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift*, 1, 2 (May/June 1824), p.105.

²³³Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis Van die Afrikaanse Literatuur*, p.30; Bank, 'Liberals and Their Enemies', p.248.

imbued with the "holy spirit" which made him behave in a most "pious and Christian way".²³⁴ The Cape Dutch designated and identified themselves as his descendants, the bearers of Christianity to southern Africa, and turned his landing into a moment of great religious significance.

The Van Riebeeck diary, as it appears in the *Tydschrift*, is treated as the founding document of this Christian world that the Cape Dutch intelligentsia sought to construct at what they called "*dezen uithoek*" [this outpost]. Faure saw it as his duty to clutch the diary from the abyss of amnesia before the "*knabbelende muis*" [nibbling mouse] destroyed the basis of their past on paper. The memory that he wanted to produce by publishing the diary was a sense of "*kennis van het Vaderland*" [knowledge of the Fatherland], defined neither in Holland nor in England, but at "*dezen zuidpunt*" [this south point] where Van Riebeeck faced and dealt with "*vele moeyelyheden*" [many problems] in establishing the 'Christian settlement'.²³⁵ Events that were not directly related to this central theme, such as the voyage to the Cape, were at times left out of the *Tydschrift's* diary, and those that were regarded as central were highlighted. The clearest example of the latter is the decision in 1654 to commemorate the landing. The entry for 6 April appears in the same typeface as the rest of the periodical, but the proclamation by Van Riebeeck that this date should be permanently instituted as a day of prayer so that their descendants do not forget "*des Heeren weldaden aan ons bewenen*" [the mercies we have received at the Lord's hands], appears in italics.²³⁶ By alerting the readers to this entry, Faure was attaching to a Christian identity a principle of beginning with a legitimacy of historical-religious ancestry in the pages of their founding text.

To assert that the diary assumed biblical proportions in the pages of the *Tydschrift*, though, would be taking this linkage with a Christian identity a little too far. There was a recognition in the first issue of the periodical that to carry too much religious material might alienate

²³⁴*Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift*, vol 7, no 3, pp.222-3, quoted in Bank, 'Liberals and Their Enemies', p.248.

²³⁵*Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift*, 1, 2, (May/June 1824), p.103.

²³⁶*Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift*, 4, 5 (September/October 1827), p.353.

readers and that it was necessary to mix it with more enjoyable matter.²³⁷ When excerpts from the diary first appeared, in the following edition, the editor expressed the hope that it would provide every South African with pleasant reading.²³⁸ Every second month from 1824 the readers of the *Tydschrift* could follow, in serialised form, the diary of Van Riebeeck, with the editor at times filling in gaps when he felt there were problems of continuity. He also contributed speculative material when he thought it necessary to provide historical background that readers might not have at their fingertips.²³⁹ What readers were thus encountering when they read the daily journal of the governor of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape of Good Hope between 1652 and 1662 was more than anything a serialised story of the past. It was a story with strong religious overtones, to be taken immensely seriously, and at same time a story to enjoy and follow, with eager anticipation, every second month. This diary, unfortunately for its readers, had to come to an abrupt ending four years before Van Riebeeck left the Cape, when the magazine closed down in 1840.

As the serialised diary in the *Tydschrift* was drawing to a premature end, extracts from the 'Journal of Commander Jan van Riebeeck', translated into English, appeared in *The Record, A Series of Official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Tribes of South Africa*, compiled by Donald Moodie. Officially commissioned by the governor of the Cape, Benjamin D'Urban in 1836, *The Record* was compiled in response to a despatch from the Secretary for State for Colonies, Lord Glenelg. In this missive, forwarded to Cape Town from London at the end of 1835, Glenelg severely castigated the colonial government at the Cape for its 'native policy' which had "provoked" the Xhosa into invading the colony. Based upon the evidence before him, which largely emanated from the missionary, John Philip, he proclaimed that, in the light of the way that the colonial administration was dealing with the Xhosa, the Xhosa had "ample justification" for their invasion of the colony.²⁴⁰ It was to counter these accusations from London, based upon Philip's evidence, that Donald Moodie,

²³⁷*Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift*, 1, 1 (March/April 1824), p.4.

²³⁸*Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift*, 1, 2 (May/June 1824), p.104.

²³⁹See, for example, *Het Nederduitsch Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift*, 1, 2 (May/June 1824), p.107.

²⁴⁰Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, p.194. These events are referred to as either Hintsas's War or The Fourth Frontier War.

an ex-magistrate and Protector of Slaves in the Eastern Division of the Cape Colony, was appointed, on a salary of £400 a year, to unearth as much documentation as possible on "relations between the colonists and the tribes".²⁴¹ He devoted his time to "beaver[ing] away among the records of the central government" and writing letters to magistrates in each district, attempting to locate documents which would refute Philip and hence Glenelg.²⁴² In this pursuit he collected piles and piles of manuscripts, a small proportion of which was published in three volumes of *The Record* between 1838 and 1841. Van Riebeeck's diary, which Moodie placed as the starting point of 'native policy' of (British?) colonial administration at the Cape, found itself at the beginning of these *Official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Tribes of South Africa*.

Whereas the *Tydschrift* sought to establish a Van Riebeeck ancestry for a Dutch Christian identity at the Cape through the publication of the diary, *The Record* made the diary into a document that reflected colonial policy. It was not so much, as Ross claims, that Moodie, "[l]ike all historians ... wanted to begin at the beginning ... of the Cape colony".²⁴³ When the Cape Colony began was not a cut and dried issue. Clearly the selection of Van Riebeeck as the starting point of the Cape Colony was partly in response to Philip's accusation that Van Riebeeck had treated the local population inhumanely.²⁴⁴ But Moodie went further and wanted to establish a genealogy that gave colonial policy in respect to the local population at the Cape a legitimate and long-standing inheritance. He selected many extracts from the diary for publication dealing with 'native affairs' and interspersed them with proclamations and Resolutions of Council to show 'how well' Van Riebeeck had treated the Khoi. To enhance the dramatic effect, he apparently even shifted around dates in the diary. For instance, to establish a sequence of events leading to the implementation of policy, he moves a meeting with "a party of about 9 or 10 savages of Saldahna" to 8 April. In this meeting the diarist records how Company soldiers interposed themselves between the "Saldania" and the

²⁴¹A Smith, 'Introduction' to D Moodie, *The Record or A Series of Official Papers Relative to the Condition and Treatment of the Native Tribes of South Africa*, Reprint, Amsterdam and Cape Town, (1960) p.viii.

²⁴²Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, p.195.

²⁴³Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, p.203.

²⁴⁴Bank, 'Liberals and Their Enemies', pp. 264-6; R Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, pp.206-7.

"strandlopers" (frequenters of the sea shore) to avoid conflict. Moodie follows this up with an extract from a proclamation by Van Riebeeck on 9 April that "all kindness and friendship" be shown to "the wild people".²⁴⁵ In all other versions of the diary, the events Moodie ascribes to 8 April took place on 10 April. The imperative to explicitly demonstrate 'native policy' as a 'logical evolution' to correspond to supposed 'knowledge of local conditions' seems to have been the basis for the selection and ordering of the diary in Moodie's *Record*.

The translation from the Dutch is also used by Moodie to establish a sequence of 'good relations' that were supposedly initiated by Van Riebeeck. In the events referred to on 8 (or 10) April the diarist relates that "David Konink, with two assistants and two soldiers ... were met by the said 9 savages of Saldania, and treated by them in a very amiable and handsome manner, so as to excite wonder ...".²⁴⁶ It is not exactly clear who initially treated whom amicably. In a later translation the diary reflects no such ambiguity: "Skipper David Coninck ... encountered the 9 Saldania savages who adopted such an amicable and pleasant attitude that it was almost a wonder".²⁴⁷ Moodie's version might be ascribed to his method of translation, yet at the same time it offers the reader a version of events that is not entirely clear and could be read to be an example of 'how well' company officials were approaching the local population.

To label the document that is included in Moodie's *The Record* 'Van Riebeeck's diary' is therefore probably a misnomer. Moodie's explicit intention was not to include the entire diary. He was only interested in events relating to "the Native Tribes" and selected extracts accordingly. The daily weather reports were excised and other events, such as the day of prayer on 6 April 1654, are mentioned but given much less prominence than in the *Tydschrift* version, with no description of the proceedings that took place on the day. Translated, edited, and rearranged to fit into Moodie's ordering of the evolution of colonial policy 'on the spot', Van Riebeeck's diary became the founding document for an image that British officials at the Cape were attempting to depict in the mid-nineteenth century. Like the Van Riebeeck in

²⁴⁵Moodie, *The Record*, p.10.

²⁴⁶Moodie, *The Record*, p.10.

²⁴⁷Thom (ed) *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, p.30.

Moodie's *Record* they portrayed themselves as carrying on the 'well-established tradition' of showing utmost care and benevolence towards the 'wild savages' of southern Africa, whether they be 'Saldania' or Xhosa.

In the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, Van Riebeeck's diary began to shift from its position as a delineator of inheritance and identity to a document which became authenticated as a source of history. There were three stages in its transformation into the realms of verifiable past. The first involved the collection of various fragments into volumes that were devoted entirely to publishing the diary as a whole. This was in marked contrast to the serialised and fragmentary nature of its appearance in the *Tydschrift* and *The Record* respectively. Secondly, the diary was accorded a designation as an historical document of import, by being among those selected and placed among a collection of papers officially labelled as a Colonial Archive, constituted at the Cape in the 1870s. Finally, it was the explosion of 'historical debate' in the public domain over its authorship which paved the way for its entry into history as a corroborative past.

The idea of publishing Van Riebeeck's diary in a book format was initially mooted, in Holland, in 1848, by the Historical Society of Utrecht. It was given further impetus when, in 1853, a member of the society, P A Leupe, discovered among the Dutch government papers an extant copy of the diary, including the section on the outward bound voyage omitted by the *Tydschrift*, which had been "received from the Cape by the East India Company (Chamber of Amsterdam)".²⁴⁸ This early section was subsequently published, along with extracts from the *Tydschrift*, in a booklet that ended in October 1652. It was not until 1884 that the society began publishing the diary in the form of volumes, completing the work in 1893, with Van Riebeeck's departure to Malacca.²⁴⁹

The stated aim of the editor, Dr W G Brill, was to arouse some interest in South Africa among people in Holland, perhaps to establish affinity with the group of Dutch speakers who,

²⁴⁸'Introduction' to Historisch Genootskap Gevesitgd te Utrecht, *Dagverhaal van Jan Van Riebeeck*, Utrecht (1884), p.v; Thom, 'Introduction', p.xxxiii.

²⁴⁹D B Bosman, 'Van Riebeeck Se Dagregister', *Die Huisgenoot*, 9 April 1948.

at various times, held the reins of power in the northern part of South Africa. To help establish these connections he assigned himself the task of reproducing the diary in "*al zijne uitvoerigheid*" [in its original form], leaving out no detail in case "*de een of andere lezer mocht soms meenen, dat in het weggelatene eenig bericht school, hetwelk zijne belangsteeling verdiend sou hebben*" [some reader or other might consider that in an omitted passage there might have been some information meriting his interest"].²⁵⁰ In spite of criticisms that Brill did not accomplish his aim of publishing the diary in its entirety - he left out the weather bulletins (in favour of what he called more "*belangrijke bijzonderheid*" [important issues]²⁵¹), the voyage to the Cape (as he relied for the first 72 pages on directly copying the version from the *Tydschrift*) and some letters and parts of official proclamations²⁵² - he did set the diary on the course of becoming allotted to verifiable history. Its derivation from a society solely committed, through its *Kronijk* [Chronicle] and other publications, to establishing and disseminating 'facts' about the past contributed to its assignation as an historical source. But it was the very fact that the diary was published as an (in)complete historical document that gave it its status. In later years, when a new edition of the diary was being published, the Utrecht version was called "the main source of information for anyone studying Van Riebeeck and his time at the Cape".²⁵³ Another editor, who expressed misgivings about the shortcomings of the Utrecht volumes, still acknowledged that they were of immense value because it was "*die enigste gedrukte bron waaruit ons volledige en betroubare gegevens oor die stigtingsjare kon put*" [the only published source from which we can draw complete and reliable information about the founding years].²⁵⁴ Van Riebeeck's diary was being established on the route into History by becoming a published source of the past.

Publication was one way of establishing a document as an authentic historical source. Another was to locate it among other selected documents in a depository that provided restricted access, called an archive. The influence of Rankean ideas on history in the nineteenth century,

²⁵⁰ 'Introduction' to Historisch Genootskap, *Dagverhaal*, p.xii, ix.

²⁵¹ 'Introduction' to Historisch Genootskap, *Dagverhaal*, p.ix.

²⁵² Thom, 'Introduction', p.xxxiv.

²⁵³ Thom, 'Introduction', p.xxxiv.

²⁵⁴ Bosman, 'Van Riebeeck Se Dagregister', 9 April 1948.

with its focus on scientifically establishing empirically verifiable sets of facts, had fetishised the concept of an archive and given manuscripts an almost magical aura that only those who knew and learnt 'the secrets' of discovery could unearth.²⁵⁵ In 1876 the government of the Cape set up a commission "to collect, examine, classify and index the archives of the colony". The outcome of this commission was that a special fire-proof room in the office of the Surveyor-General's office was set aside to store the records of the various administrations of the Cape from 1652 to 1806 (which included in it the manuscript of Van Riebeeck's diary). In 1879 George Theal was appointed, in a temporary, part-time capacity, as "Officer in Charge of Colonial Archives".²⁵⁶ Theal was immediately overwhelmed by the material available in the Cape archives and saw for himself a future career mapped out before his eyes. But Theal's assumption that he would become the official 'magician' who would discover and order the 'secrets' of the South African past did not materialise. When the government in 1881 converted the post into a full-time "Librarian of the House of Assembly and Keeper of the Colonial Archives", Theal, much to his fury and dismay, was overlooked and H C V Leibrandt, a liberal church minister who had some limited experience in sorting out the records of the landdrost at Graaff Reinet, was appointed. Theal was later appointed as Colonial Historiographer.²⁵⁷ The result was a bitter rivalry between Leibrandt and Theal, part of which came to the fore in their respective interpretations of historical events and persons. Leibrandt, for instance, tried to show that the governor William Adrian Van Der Stel was not the tyrannous despot that initially the burghers, through their complaints at the time, and Theal, as an historian, depicted him as. Yet this conflict went deeper and centred around the official designation that Leibrandt had as Keeper of the Archives. Deliberately flouting Leibrandt's position Theal, at times, withheld documents that were in his personal possession from Leibrandt and published his own collections, at one time apparently using material that

²⁵⁵Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, p.269.

²⁵⁶J F Preller, 'Archival Development in South Africa (1876-1922)', *South African Archives Journal*, 3, 3 (1961), pp.43-4; J H Davies, 'The Organisational Development of the Government Archives of the Union of South Africa', *South African Archives Journal*, 2, 2 (1960), pp.7-9. The archives were moved in 1883 to the South African Public Library and in 1884 to a cellar below Parliament, where they were housed for the next fifty years. See C J Beyers, 'Die Huisvesting van die Kaapse Argief', *South African Archives Journal*, 1, 1 (1959), p.47.

²⁵⁷Saunders, *The Making*, p.13.

Leibrandt had acquired on a trip to Holland, without acknowledgement.²⁵⁸ What was at stake was access to and control of the archives and the 'secrets' of history, with Theal assuming his 'rights' as a pre-eminent historian and Leibrandt doing so through his official position as the 'keeper'.

One of the issues on which Theal and Leibrandt confronted each other in their dispute over archival material was Leibrandt's penchant to publish and translate documents in a precis form. One of the documents that he summarised and translated was Van Riebeeck's journal for the years 1651-1653. Leibrandt's rationale in compiling these translated summaries was to widen public access to archival material, particularly for English readers who were unable to understand the Dutch documents.²⁵⁹ The precis project formed part of the much broader political initiative that he, along with people like Dorothy Fairbridge, was involved with of establishing a white unity in the context of the British Empire. Theal could not accept this summary practice. He had published abstracts himself, but found them to be unsatisfactory and after returning from Europe in 1894 condemned the practice of producing precis of documents as worthless, lacking historical accuracy.²⁶⁰ In spite of this criticism from Theal, 'the historian', Leibrandt, 'the custodian', continued to publish summaries and translations of material in the archives, including the volumes of Van Riebeeck's diary which appeared in 1897. The selection by Leibrandt of the diary for publication in summary form made it more than an official document of the past located in a designated archive. It singled it out for wider accessibility as one of the most "valuable sources of information".²⁶¹

Leibrandt's translated summary of the diary was in a sense similar to the textbook productions of the past. He reduced the diary to an abbreviated essence in order to make it into an historical document that could be easily read and understood in English for 'facts', without having to plough through and translate endless pages of a Dutch text. On the meeting with

²⁵⁸Davies, 'Hendrik Carel Vos Leibrandt', in D W Kruger (ed), *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol 11, Pretoria (circa 1972), pp.385-7.

²⁵⁹Davies, 'Hendrik Carel Vos Leibrandt', p.386.

²⁶⁰A Boeseken, 'Theal as Baanbreker', *South African Archives Journal*, 1, 1 (1959), p.37.

²⁶¹Davies, 'Hendrik Carel Vos Leibrandt', p.386.

the Saldanhars on 10 April 1652, for instance, he leaves out the description of the attitude adopted by the Dutch and/or the Saldanhars and relates the event in 'factual' terms: "Skipper David Coninck ... meets the 9 Saldanhars, who take him round the neck and promise cattle and sheep in exchange for copper and tobacco ...". Unlike the Utrecht version, though, he does include a summary of the diary entries of Van Riebeeck's voyage to the Cape. But instead of providing details on navigational and weather information, he merely adds a note that "The diary of the voyage further contains full particulars about the progress of the vessel each day ...".²⁶² Readers who were interested in finding out more information were presumably being encouraged to go to the archives themselves, while those who were not interested could continue reading without the 'interference' of the particulars that Leibrandt had decided were not relevant and which inhibited the flow of the 'factual' narrative. The summary also made the process of 'dipping into the text' to find specifics much easier, although with a great deal excised much detail could really only be found in the Utrecht text or by going to the archives. It is for the latter reason that H B Thom labelled Leibrandt's diary of Jan van Riebeeck as "defect[ive]" and "not very reliable".²⁶³ But what Leibrandt had done was to take Van Riebeeck's diary much further into the domain of being a source of history. He had established it firmly as an archival document imbued with the 'magic' of historical discovery. This was done through his custodianship of it in the depths of the parliament, where the archives were located after 1884, his publication of a precis of all three volumes, signifying it as a document of import, and by making "the essence of an important archival document available to the English-speaking world".²⁶⁴ The implication, in Leibrandt's terms, was that Van Riebeeck's diary was no longer being produced as a document of identity and curiosity with archaic value but as a document of history for a 'white' South Africa that formed part of the British Empire.

The publication and location of the diary in the latter part of the nineteenth century had clearly started to set it apart as a source of History. When consideration was given to re-

²⁶²H C V Leibrandt, *Precis of the Archives of the Cape of Good Hope, December, 1651 - December, 1653, Riebeeck's Journal & C*, Cape Town (1897), pp.19, 17.

²⁶³Thom, 'Introduction', p.xl

²⁶⁴Thom, 'Introduction', p.xl; See also C J Roussouw, 'Die Werk van Hendrik Carel Vos Leibrandt as Agivaris en Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedskywer', MA, UNISA (1944), p.71, who makes the same point.

publishing the diary in the 1940s, a debate took place among 'professors' over its authorship, which secured its status as an historical document. The authoritative power of the 'scholarly debate' in the making of the diary into history-as-discipline was that it was not merely concerned with the production of material but that concurrently it was also about how the past was read and interpreted in a space - the terrain, issues and form of debate - common to the participants. Establishing positions in 'the debate' was as much about negotiating this space as it was about the intellectual content of the presentation.²⁶⁵

When the authorship of Van Riebeeck's diary was debated in 1944, it was demarcated in a dual setting. On the one hand the debate was very much about academic expertise, with the two chief protagonists, H B Thom and D B Bosman, the professor of Dutch-Afrikaans Linguistics at the University of Cape Town, presenting their respective positions from their disciplinary authority. However, the debate was not conducted within the realms of the 'academic world', but in the pages of *Die Huisgenoot* [The Family Companion], the popular Afrikaans magazine which had been established in 1916. *Die Huisgenoot* directed itself towards a market of readers whom it constructed as a typical Afrikaans household, with the emphasis very much on women and the family as the bearer of an Afrikaner identity. Its contents ranged from short stories, items of 'cultural interest', articles on aspects of an identified Afrikaner history to a special section for "*die vrou*" [the wife], dealing with home maintenance and domestic 'responsibilities'. With the emphasis it placed on dealing with educational material, it was popularly accorded the label of "'the poor man's university'".²⁶⁶ Here the 'academics' had to present themselves and their arguments to a much wider public, who were not always aware of the niceties of their positions. Often it was the way in which they presented their 'academic credentials' to the readers that assumed primary importance in the debate. It was this presentation of the experts and the imaging of their expertise to the readers of *Die Huisgenoot* in a debate over who really wrote the diary that was to make it, by consensus between the participants, into a document of the 'scientifically' verifiable past.

²⁶⁵Cohen, *The Combining of History*, p.52.

²⁶⁶Hofmeyr, 'Building a Nation', p.113. Given its market focus, perhaps a 'poor womens' university' might have been more appropriate.

Before the debate entered the pages of *Die Huisgenoot*, the first salvos were fired at a meeting of the Van Riebeeck Society. This organisation, which had about 1 000 paid up members in the 1940s, was officially established in 1918. It was primarily involved in the publication of documents on South African history that its nine member Council, drawn mainly from academics at the Universities of Cape Town and Stellenbosch, determined to be of value. What constituted value was open to a variety of interpretations, but it does appear from their list of publications that those initially favoured were accounts of missionaries, travellers and settlers.²⁶⁷ At a Council meeting in 1940 Prof D B Bosman's proposal, that the society "arrange for the editing of the Journal of Jan van Riebeeck" in view of the approaching "300th anniversary (in 1952) of the landing ... at the Cape", was accepted.²⁶⁸ The diary was being accorded the status as one of the most important sources of a South African past, determined as such by the Van Riebeeck Society which took upon itself the task of broadening its accessibility through publication. Over the next six years, apart from some preliminary work of transcribing the manuscript in the Cape archives little was done about carrying this project to fruition.²⁶⁹ What did occur was that one of the prime movers behind the project, H B Thom, began to raise serious doubts about the authorship of the diary. To the astonishment of some members of the society at the annual general meeting in 1943 he produced evidence to show that "*alhoewel die Dagverhaal gewoonlik met Van Riebeeck se naam verbind word, hy nie die skrywer daarvan was nie*" [although Van Riebeeck's name is usually associated with the Diary he did not write it].²⁷⁰

Early the following year Thom reproduced his evidence in the pages of *Die Huisgenoot*. Thom pointed out that given Van Riebeeck's duties as commander, he would have had little time to devote to making entries in a journal, that much of the diary is written in the third

²⁶⁷This very brief synopsis of the origins and aims of the Van Riebeeck Society is derived from F Bradlow, *The Van Riebeeck Society 1918-1978*, Cape Town (1978). The laws of the society and the listed publications are on the backpages of every publication of the society.

²⁶⁸D H Varley, 'The Van Riebeeck Diary: Progress Report on the Tercentenary edition 1940-1952', 1 September 1952, US, Thom, Box 49; Minutes of Council Meeting of Van Riebeeck Society, 15 June 1940, SAL, Van Riebeeck Society (hereafter VRS), Minute Book, MSB 633, 1 (1).

²⁶⁹'The Van Riebeeck Diary: Progress Report', US, Thom, Box 49.

²⁷⁰H Thom, 'Van Riebeeck Se Dagverhaal', *Die Huisgenoot*, 28 January 1944.

person and not the first person, that there are different handwritings apparent in the script, none of which match Van Riebeeck's, and even after he departed from the Cape in 1662 the same handwriting that appeared immediately before his departure is still evident. He also dismissed the option that Van Riebeeck might have dictated the diary on the basis that it was not his duty to engage with the keeping of records. This was the task of his secretarial and accounting staff, and this was apparent from the entries in the diary that referred to events around the fort even when Van Riebeeck was not present. On the basis of this evidence Thom reached his conclusion that Van Riebeeck did not write the diary and that it was nothing more than an official record of the first ten years of an ordinary daily journal that the Dutch East India Company insisted should be maintained at all its posts. He therefore suggested that the journal should be more appropriately titled "*Die Kaapse Dagregister tydens Van Riebeeck, 1652-1662*" [The Daily Register at the Cape during the time of Van Riebeeck, 1652-1662].²⁷¹

The rejoinder came a few weeks later from Prof Bosman. Asserting his position as a linguist rather than an historian - many years later his doctoral thesis was described as "the first purely scientific dissertation on the Afrikaans language by an Afrikaans speaking person"²⁷² - he claimed that writing 2 000 pages over a ten year period would not have taken up a lot of Van Riebeeck's time. The linguistic style of the diary was also similar to other documents that are attributed to Van Riebeeck and writing in the third person was the convention of the day and considered to be less discourteous and more appropriate than writing in the first person. The evidence in respect of the handwriting he did not regard as conclusive as he claimed that all extant copies of the diary, including the one in the archives in Cape Town, were copies. Finally, he pointed out that there were moments in the diary which could only have been written by Van Riebeeck as they are expressions of his innermost thoughts and personal feelings. All this of what Bosman called "*interne getuienis*" [internal evidence] was enough to convince him that Van Riebeeck did write the journal and that it should be called the *Dagverhaal van Jan van Riebeeck* [Diary of Jan van Riebeeck].²⁷³

²⁷¹Thom, 'Van Riebeeck Se Dagverhaal'.

²⁷²F C L Bosman, 'D B Bosman', *Dictionary of South African Biography*, vol 3, Pretoria (1977), p.83.

²⁷³D B Bosman, 'Van Riebeeck Se Dagverhaal', *Die Huisgenoot*, 3 March 1944.

Thom's reply was to assert historical methodology as scientific and to claim that Bosman had overlooked very important issues relating to the use of evidence. He maintained that he could point to many documents that were written in the same linguistic style as Van Riebeeck, but were in fact written by a variety of company officials. Furthermore, he declared that the average length of entries in the diary was misleading as some were lengthy and must have taken a long time to write, and the 'personal entries' did not in any way offer any conclusive proof that Van Riebeeck was the author. Insisting upon his argument that the diary was written in the third person - for whatever reason - he also maintained that Bosman did not address his most convincing two pieces of evidence, that the diary was written while Van Riebeeck was absent from the fort at Saldahna Bay and that it continued in the same script even after Van Riebeeck left the Cape in 1662. This remained clear cut proof for Thom that Van Riebeeck did not write the diary and that Bosman was "*nie genoegsaam in die metodes van historiese ondersoek geskool nie*" [not sufficiently trained in the methods of historical inquiry].²⁷⁴

Although no definitive conclusion had been reached, the debate between Thom and Bosman in the pages of *Die Huisgenoot* came to an end. Yet, in their engagement with the debate over authorship of the Van Riebeeck diary/journal/daily register in the pages of this popular magazine, they had established it as an authentic source of momentous historical import. Their styles had at times resorted to the polemic with rhetorical questions replacing sustained argument and issues often being left hanging with the words "*Ek laat dit egter daar*" [I would rather leave it there].²⁷⁵ Couched in these 'popular' techniques, they proclaimed their academic credentials and expertise in dealing with the issue under debate. Bosman claimed that although he was not acquainted with the sources and historical research of any other period, as a "*taalhistorikus*" [language historian] he had been interested in Van Riebeeck's diary since 1922 and had written a book *Afrikaanse Taaltoestande tydens Jan van Riebeeck* [*The State of the Afrikaans Language in the time of Jan Van Riebeeck*].²⁷⁶ Thom, in questioning the authorship of the diary, portrayed himself as being on a quest for historical truth, fighting

²⁷⁴H B Thom, 'Van Riebeeck se Dagverhaal Nogeens', *Die Huisgenoot*, 10 March 1944.

²⁷⁵See for example, Thom, 'Van Riebeeck se Dagverhaal Nogeens'.

²⁷⁶Bosman, 'Van Riebeeck Se Dagverhaal'.

against uncritical acceptance, "*vyand No.1 van die ware geskiedsskrywing*" [the number one enemy of real historical writing].²⁷⁷ To reach conclusions without historical proof, as he claimed Bosman had done, was sacrilegious and not part of the discipline of history. In both these instances, though, through the assumptions of expertise, Van Riebeeck's diary had become a subject of historical debate that could be treated seriously, analysed for veracity and effectively used as historical evidence by those 'trained' in the respective disciplinary methodologies. On the public terrain, where the debate was conducted, the diary was being established as a document of interest and importance that 'people in the know' could argue about. When the most public event associated with Van Riebeeck took place eight years later, the tercentenary festival associated with his landing, it was not altogether surprising these two, self-styled 'protagonists' were to be most immediately responsible for the re-publication of the diary by the Van Riebeeck Society. Bosman was to be the editor of the Dutch edition, writing the introduction and the notes on language usage, while Thom was to prepare the English edition and provide the "necessary historical annotations" for both versions.²⁷⁸

By the mid-1940s, Van Riebeeck's diary was a different document from the one that had started off its life in the offices of the colonial secretary and every second month in the *Tydschrift*. It had become a source of history as a verifiable past, established through its publication, archival location and its being debated in a magazine which focused on items of interest for the home. With the 300th anniversary of 'the landing' approaching, Van Riebeeck was clearly establishing himself as a figure with an historically written past. Although it was not clear that his diary enabled readers to "*deur sy bril alles bekyk en met sy hart alles voel* [see everything through his spectacles and feel everything with his heart],²⁷⁹ it authenticated a past that started to clear the way for his landing in 1952.

²⁷⁷Thom, 'Van Riebeeck se Dagverhaal Nogeens'.

²⁷⁸Thom 'Introduction', p.xvi.

²⁷⁹Hofmeyr, *Kykies vir Kinders*, p.36.

Moments in Van Riebeeck's past.

In a paper that Ciraj Rassool and I wrote in 1993, we asserted that "up until the 1940s, Van Riebeeck and 6 April had very little place in public history. Except for intermittent moments of small-scale ceremonies, confined to isolated ceremonies, the landing was barely commemorated".²⁸⁰ If seen in comparison to the massive scale of events that followed and were associated with the tercentenary festival in 1952, which was the focus of our paper, this contention has some validity. But if one begins to track Van Riebeeck's past through a variety of public forms into the 1940s, as this chapter has done, the picture which emerges is somewhat different. By the 1940s the wreath-laying ceremonies at the base of his statue in Adderley Street were becoming increasingly popular and the site of intense controversy over whom the appropriate organisers should be, in school text books Van Riebeeck was drawing ever closer to the beginning of the past and his diary was being validated as an historical source. It is clear that in respect of Van Riebeeck there was not almost total amnesia.

This marking of Van Riebeeck and the landing as a character and a date of significance respectively had as much to do with the interventions of designated historians as it did with those who were associated with the production of history in the public domain. In the 'profession' which emerged in the nineteenth century in South Africa, historians, like Theal and Thom, undoubtedly contributed a great deal to this signification through their various publications and by participating in 'historical debates'. Often it was their interventions which established the authentic aura for events and figures of the past, setting them in the realm of 'critical discourse'. At the same time a range of organisations and individuals were producing their own Van Riebeecks, sometimes using the work of 'professional historians', but also drawing upon each other in establishing their veracity. Missionaries, teachers, artists, politicians, colonial officials, theologians, governors, commissioners, novelists and cultural organisations all shaped their own and other images of Van Riebeeck and his past. Their Van Riebeecks were shaped as much by their political contexts as by the formats in which they produced their pasts.

²⁸⁰ Rassool and Witz, 'Constructing and Contesting', p.451.

The result of these complementary and often contradictory productions of Van Riebeeck's past was that by the 1940s he had not merely become the figure of the Afrikaner nationalist past, that some historians have depicted him to be.²⁸¹ There was a sense in which he was becoming a *volksplanter* but at the same time his imperial imagery remained very strong. He was a religious founder for some, while others associated him with oppression and destruction. Sometimes he was the Dutch ancestor; at other times he even became English. In other instances he combined elements derived from these various versions of his past. There was not a singular Jan van Riebeeck in South Africa's past. With the 300th anniversary of 1652 on the horizon, a way had to be negotiated between these multiple pasts by those who were involved in organising the tercentenary celebrations. This was necessary to ensure that Van Riebeeck landed safely on the shores of Granger Bay in April 1952.

²⁸¹See M S Jeppie, 'Aspects of Popular Culture and Class Expression in Inner Cape Town, circa 1939-1959', M A thesis, UCT (1990), pp.147-150; A Grundlingh, 'Die Mite van die Volksvader', *Vrye Weekblad*, 5 April 1991.

CHAPTER TWO

"WE BUILD A NATION": THE FESTIVAL OF UNITY AND EXCLUSION.¹

Granger Bay is a small protected inlet immediately to the west of Table Bay. It is adjacent to the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, a resurrected part of Cape Town harbour with a complex of shops, restaurants, bars, museums, hotels and movie houses, all set in an imagined world of a reconstructed British maritime past.² For Granger Bay, being sited in this locale has meant that it has become the scene of a flurry of construction activity to service visitors to the consumer emporium on the Waterfront. Roads around the bay have been widened and re-directed to lead to the Waterfront, with parking lots and garages built for the increased volume of motor car traffic and hotels erected for tourists in this "place of pleasure and entertainment within a pretty 'historic' setting".³ Granger Bay is not unaccustomed to this role of providing the facilities for the re-presentation of history in the public vista. In April 1952 it was the stage for a pageant of the past in which Jan van Riebeeck, accompanied by his family and a group of soldiers, re-created their landing at the Cape three hundred years before. This scene was the culminating drama in a government-sponsored festival, conceived of as integral to the construction of a past and future South Africa based upon a form of racial exclusivity, which simultaneously proclaimed itself to be nationally inclusive. With Van Riebeeck as its central icon, the festival was designed to "commemorate the establishment of the White settlement at the Cape of Good Hope by Jan van Riebeeck three hundred years ago", utilising as its central theme, "We Build a Nation".⁴

At the time of the Van Riebeeck festival of 1952, Granger Bay contained none of the amenities that were built some forty-odd years later to accommodate visitors to the

¹The title of this chapter is derived from a paper by Jonathan Sperber, 'Festivals of National Unity in the German Revolution of 1848-1849', *Past and Present*, 136 (August 1992), pp.114-138.

²See N Worden and E van Heyningen, 'Signs of the Times: Tourism and Public History at Cape Town's Victoria and Alfred Waterfront', *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines*, XXXVI-1-2 (1996) pp.215-36.

³V Bickford-Smith and E van Heyningen (eds), *The Waterfront*, Cape Town (1994), p.7.

⁴*Official Festival Programme*, p.7.

Waterfront. The beach comprised mainly "just a bunch of rocks", and although there was a narrow strip of land, it was littered with stones and generally the entire area around the bay was considered to be "*vuil*" and "*onromanties*" [dirty and unromantic].⁵ The organisers of the pageant had searched for a site for Van Riebeeck to come ashore but could find nothing that was pre-eminently suitable. Woodstock beach was considered but found to be too flat as well as aesthetically unpleasing. The other possible alternative, the harbour, did not fit into the 'historic' motif as its facilities were considered too modern to provide an appropriate backdrop. In spite of all the difficulties associated with Granger Bay, it was still possible to land there, as evidenced by fishing boats using the beach. Anna Neethling-Pohl, the pageant mistress, and V J Penso, the chair of the Dromedaris sub-committee of the festival, therefore decided to choose it as the site where Van Riebeeck should set foot, on 5 April 1952. Mediating between an appropriate historical reconstruction with an aura of authenticity and the need to tidy up the area for the participants and spectators, an "ugly" fishing shed was destroyed, another building camouflaged as a bush, the beach was cleaned and the sand levelled out without "*sy ongerepte karakter aan te tas*" [touching its unspoilt character].⁶

Just after 10 o'clock on the morning of Saturday 5 April, Jan van Riebeeck (played by Andre Huguenet), together with his wife Maria (Frances Holland), and their son Lambertus, disembarked from a replica of their ship, the Dromedaris, and, with assistance of marine cadets from the South African Nautical College, landed at the tidy theatre on the beach at Granger Bay.⁷ As they came ashore Van Riebeeck, with a broad smile, motioned to his family, soldiers and crew to step forward and advance towards a small hillock. There, in the full view of the 20 000 strong crowd that had assembled, he planted the flag and, gazing upon Table Mountain, took possession of the "*grote and schone land*" [large and beautiful land] in the name of the Dutch East India Company (see illustration 2).⁸

⁵Interview with Joe Almond, Fish Hoek, 23 September 1994; A Neethling-Pohl, 'Verslag Oor Die Landing Van Die Dromedaris', 5 May 1952, CA, K Jeffreys Collection, A1657, vol 322.

⁶Neethling-Pohl, 'Verslag Oor Die Landing'.

⁷For a description of the landing from the perspective of a marine cadet, see I V Bole, 'The Landing of Jan van Riebeeck', *Both Watches* (1952), pp.31-2.

⁸'Script for Symbolic Landing of Van Riebeeck at Granger Bay', Minutes, Meeting of Pageant Sub-Committee, 17 January 1952, UCT (ASL), McM: Van Riebeeck Festival.

But the drama on the beach at Granger Bay could not end there. More of a spectacle was necessary to satisfy the audience which had waited patiently for hours to view the proceedings. In the planning stages Anna Neethling-Pohl had wanted to base the morning's activities on the beach on entries in Van Riebeeck's diary in order to make the historical drama as realistic as possible. Unfortunately the problem was that the diary made very little mention of the landing. The script that was ultimately written and approved by members of the Dromedaris sub-committee, rehearsed three or four times and then played out on the beach of Granger Bay on Saturday 5 April 1952 divided the ceremony into two parts. The first part started after the flag planting ceremony, when a group of Griquas - hand picked by the government's Commissioner of Coloured Affairs after other "*nie-blankes*" [non-whites] who had been approached by the festival organisers had refused to participate - playing the part of *strandlopers* [literally = beach strollers], emerged from their hiding places and approached Van Riebeeck. Upon orders from their commander the soldiers accompanying Van Riebeeck brought forward a kist containing a variety of trinkets, pieces of copper and mirrors, which were then handed over to the *strandlopers* as gifts. Van Riebeeck made a speech proclaiming that they had not come to make a profit at the expense of the people but to bring order and the light of 'civilisation'. The Griquas acting as *strandlopers* then, as per instruction from Anna Neethling-Pohl, displayed appreciation for these words and their gifts from Van Riebeeck and the 'civilised world', bowing before him and retreating with expressions of pleasure and gratitude. The radio commentators, broadcasting the ceremony to listeners around South Africa on Saturday morning, marvelled at how the organisers had stopped at nothing to make everything as historically authentic as possible in this well-rehearsed, script-written past that was largely derived, not from Van Riebeeck's diary, as the commentators assumed, but from the painting by Charles Davidson Bell, with Maria and Lambertus now joining the soldiers and sailors on the canvas of the past.⁹

The release of pigeons, accompanied by another shot from the Dromedaris, signalled the second, more symbolic phase of the ceremony, marking it off from the 'real' history which

⁹This account of events on the beach of Granger Bay on 5 April 1952 is based upon A Neethling-Pohl, 'Verslag Oor Die Landing'; 'Script for Symbolic Landing of Van Riebeeck'; 'Order of Stage Directions for the Landing of the Dromedaris', CA, A 1657, vol 322; 'Landing van Van Riebeeck te Granger Bay', SABC, 19/31-35 (52).



Figure 2: Landing of Jan, Maria and Lambertus van Riebeeck at Granger Bay, 5 April 1952, Cape Times, *The Festival in Pictures*, Cape Town (1952), p.35.

had supposedly just been enacted. Maria handed Jan a box containing eight scrolls signifying "The Treasury of the Nation": religion, Roman-Dutch law, freedom, language, agriculture, industry and commerce, defence and arts. Each scroll was then presented to prominent individuals who were designated by the festival organisers as "representatives of the people".¹⁰ A musical flourish from the South African Police Band completed the ceremony on the beach, after which Jan, accompanied by Maria, was conveyed to the Castle, where they posed for a photographic session before taking up residence in the nation that had been built exclusively for them.

This re-creation of the event of landing as colonial settlement, at the end of a week of drama, speeches, pageantry and displays in Cape Town, was the fount for the beginning of the past that the Van Riebeeck festival of 1952 sought to portray. Like the landing itself, this was not a national past that was easy to produce for the festival. It did not flow spontaneously from the moment specified as origin to the sands of Granger Bay some three hundred years later. The path to an "existence as separate people"¹¹ was littered with events and personalities which inhabited a past ridden with conflicts. In a festival that was "primarily concerned with the constructive growth of [an exclusive] South Africa", the past had to be tidied up, some incidents deleted, others camouflaged in different attires, and the ground levelled to produce "the story of White Civilisation in South Africa".¹² Once the past had been cleaned up, it had to be planned and rehearsed to provide a continuous visual spectacle for the crowds who gathered on the streets of Cape Town, at the specially constructed festival stadium on the foreshore and on the beach at Granger Bay.

In this chapter, the concern is with how these events were cleaned up and negotiated into and out of the past in making the arrangements for the arrival of Van Riebeeck and the associated festivities in the first week of April, 1952. The chapter first looks at some of the initial planning stages of the festival in the late 1940s and the multiple and changing character of its objectives. It then shifts focus to various individuals and committees and shows how in

¹⁰*Official Festival Programme*, p.87.

¹¹*Official Festival Programme*, p.11.

¹²V de Kock, *Our Three Centuries*, Cape Town (1952), p.31; *South Africa's Heritage*, frontspiece.

various ways the past was organised and authorised in order to constitute the festival. Finally, three selected events in the festival week of 30 March to 6 April - the *Volkspeler*, the People's Pageant and the Pageant of the Cape Malay - will be examined in detail, to demonstrate how they contributed to the construction of various elements of Van Riebeeck's past.

Planning for Van Riebeeck

In chapter one it was emphasised that the landing of Van Riebeeck in 1652 was not a naturally occurring event that was automatically marked as beginning. It was through commemorative ceremonies, appearances in textbooks and the publication and accessibility of Van Riebeeck's diary that he began to approach a starting point of the South African past. In much the same way, the three hundredth year since the landing was not one that was automatically associated with the notion of anniversary. To trace origins for the planning of events to commemorate the landing in 1952, one is therefore not looking for linear connections that led to the point of anniversary and festival. Instead there were a multiplicity of beginnings, at different times and locations, some of them not linked to each other, some which fell by the wayside and some which were ultimately incorporated in what became the government-funded Van Riebeeck tercentenary festival.

Some of these beginnings have already been alluded to in chapter one. In 1940, the Van Riebeeck Society had already resolved that 1952 was a date of significance and had decided to issue a commemorative edition of the diary. Subsequently it was resolved that in addition to a Dutch version, an English translation would be produced in order to broaden demand for and accessibility of the proposed publication.¹³ By 1947 translators had been approached, the archives requested to obtain a photostat copy of the diary kept in the Hague and H B Thom had applied for special leave from his teaching post at the University of Stellenbosch to "undertake the editing and general supervision of the Dagboek [Diary]".¹⁴ School texts, as well, were bringing Van Riebeeck much more to the fore and starting to emphasise the

¹³Minutes of Annual General Meeting Van Riebeeck Society, 24 March 1945, SAL, VRS, MSB 633, 1 (1).

¹⁴'The Van Riebeeck Diary: Progress Report on the Tercentenary edition', US, Thom, Box 49.

landing in 1652 as the beginning of South African history. Annual ceremonies on 5-8 April at the base of the Van Riebeeck statue in Adderley Street and in the Hofmeyr Hall had become also commonplace. The Cape Town City Council, the *Algemeen Nederlands Verbond* (ANV) and the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuur Verenigings* (FAK) were all co-operating and competing to organise the wreath laying activities.

In addition to these moments already referred to in some detail, in 1946, a lecturer in the Department of History at the University of the Witwatersrand, Arthur Keppel-Jones had written a future history of South Africa entitled *When Smuts Goes*. According to Keppel-Jones, who has subsequently been labelled the "historian who had turned to prophecy", the purpose of the book was two-fold. Firstly it was a prediction that the Nationalist Party, led by DF Malan, which was then the opposition party in the South African parliament, held more popular appeal among the white electorate than seemed apparent through its somewhat poor performance in 1938 and 1943 general elections. Secondly, the book warned that these Nationalists were dangerous as they operated and asserted a policy of racial supremacy that was distinctly similar to that of the Nazis in Germany. If such a party came to power in South Africa, he maintained, the country would quickly slip into a morass, be faced with international condemnation, sanctions and possible invasion.¹⁵ The book started off in 1952 with the tercentenary festival to commemorate Van Riebeeck's landing, presaging an election victory for the Nationalist Party over the governing United Party, led by Jan Smuts, in the same year. The central event of Keppel-Jones's imagined celebration was the landing of Van Riebeeck, who arrived on board the *Dromedaris* at Woodstock beach on Sunday 6 April 1952, after which a series of speeches were made by Nationalist Party politicians.¹⁶ Keppel-Jones undoubtedly saw this festival in the future as a blatant attempt to evoke an Afrikaner past so as to further the agenda of the Nationalist Party.

Throughout the length and breadth of the country, on hilltops and battlefields, at monuments and at the graves of martyrs, there were gatherings, speeches, processions. In vine-clad Western Province valleys, in the dorps of the

¹⁵A H Jeeves, 'Arthur Keppel-Jones: Scholar, Teacher, Liberal Intellectual', *SAHJ* 32 (May 1995), p. 24; Interview with Arthur Keppel-Jones, conducted by Prof Alan Jeeves at Queens University, 14 June 1994, *SAHJ*, 32 (May 1995), p. 15.

¹⁶A Keppel-Jones, *When Smuts Goes: A History of South Africa from 1952 to 2010*, Cape Town, (2015) (1947), pp.3-4.

Highveld and Karoo, bearded youths and *kappie 'd* [capped/bonnetted] maidens dedicated themselves in an ecstasy of emotion to the Volk. Special numbers of newspapers retold the old story of the trials and tribulations of the Volk, its desperate rescue from the jaws of imperialism, its great leaders, its true course on the *Pad van Suid Afrika* [Road of South Africa].¹⁷

Afrikaners who did not conform with the political ideology of the Nationalist Party were excluded by Keppel-Jones from participation in the festival. Keppel-Jones' use of predictive powers as an historian of the future to create a Van Riebeeck festival is a further indication that the idea that 1952 was going to be an anniversary of sorts was prevalent in the 1940s, although the form which it was to take was very much more open to contestation than its automatically assuming an Afrikaner nationalist aura. The book was received with a great deal of shock by those who could not in any way envisage a future which Keppel-Jones predicted, and with anger by those in Afrikaner nationalist circles because of the suggestion that Nationalist Party rule would bring the country to near ruin.¹⁸ Somewhat ironically, it was the description of the festival in Keppel-Jones' book and the attempt, consciously or otherwise, to subvert his claims (which were seen as an attempt to poison a possible commemorative event)¹⁹ that helped shaped the form of the tercentenary celebrations and Van Riebeeck's landing at Granger Bay on 5 April 1952, some four years **after** the Nationalist Party had already come to power.

Certainly, some of the initiatives to hold a commemorative event to coincide with the three hundredth year since Van Riebeeck's landing did come from within Afrikaner nationalist circles, as predicted by Keppel-Jones. The *Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereniging* (ATKV) [Afrikaans Language and Cultural Union] which had organised the 1938 Voortrekker Centenary festival had, by 1947, established Van Riebeeck committees at several of its branches throughout the country.²⁰ The strongest drive from within Afrikaans nationalist circles to promote Van Riebeeck, though, came from the FAK which had actively participated

¹⁷Keppel-Jones, *When Smuts Goes*, p.4.

¹⁸H Jeeves, 'Arthur Keppel-Jones', p.25; Interview with Arthur Keppel-Jones, conducted by Prof Alan Jeeves, p.15.

¹⁹*Die Burger*, 9 April 1952.

²⁰Institute for Contemporary History, University of the Orange Free State [hereafter INCH], ATKV Collection, PV 379: A 11/13.

in the annual wreath laying ceremony at the base of the Van Riebeeck statue in Adderley street on 5-8 April in order to promote the idea of Van Riebeeck as the *volksplanter*, only to withdraw when it felt that the ceremony was becoming dominated by the Cape Town City Council. At its congress in July 1945, the FAK appointed a commission, which included among its ranks Prof H B Thom, charged with the task of establishing a committee that would take the necessary steps towards ensuring that the landing of Van Riebeeck would be celebrated in April 1952 in a dignified and proper way.²¹ The committee, which included representatives from the Dutch Reformed churches, the ATKV and various women's organisations, held its first meeting in April 1946. It decided to proceed with the organisation of a commemorative festival on 6 April 1952 which would have a specifically Christian and Afrikaans character. Other groupings, such as the Cape Town City Council and the United Party government, were warned that if they intended to hold a commemoration, they could not do so without the approval and cooperation of this FAK sub-committee.²²

The tentative ideas that were put forward by the FAK sub-committee coincide with the way that the 1938 Great Trek centenary celebrations were held, with the emphasis on the establishment and furthering of a unified Afrikaner identity. *Die Burger*, the Cape based Afrikaans language newspaper, which had called for the United Party government, led by Jan Smuts, to take the lead in organising the 1952 celebrations was told, in no uncertain terms, that it was through "*ons [die FAK] Komitee ... waardeur die Afrikanerdom hom in hierdie saak kan laat geld*" [our (the FAK) committee that Afrikanerdom could be represented in this issue]. In calling for *Die Burger* to come into line with the position from the north (the centre of the FAK's power base was in the Transvaal), the FAK *Van Riebeeck-Feeskomitee* asserted that it did not want the Afrikaans press issuing contradictory statements as it would weaken the FAK's self-proclaimed position to represent the "*georganiseerde Afrikanerdom op kultuurgebied*" [organised Afrikanerdom in the cultural sphere] and its right to "*so ver moontlik die voortou te neem*" [take the lead as far as possible].²³ Jan Smuts, the prime

²¹Minutes of Meeting of Commission for the Volksfees (1952), 24 August 1945, INCH, FAK Collection, PV 202: 1/8/3/5/1.

²²Minutes, *Jan van Riebeeck Feeskomitee* (1952), 1 April 1946, INCH, PV 202: 1/8/3/5/1.

²³Letter from Chair, *Jan van Riebeeck-Feeskomitee* (1952) to T E Donges, Member of Parliament, 5 April 1946, INCH, PV 202: 2/10/1/3/1.

minister, was also informed by the committee of its existence and of the planning that had already taken place for a festival in 1952. He was told that such an envisaged festival would take an "*eg Afrikaanse karakter*" [genuine Afrikaner character], with Van Riebeeck being celebrated as the founder of the "*Afrikanernasie met sy eie taal kultuur en volksaard*" [Afrikaner nation, with its own language, culture and national nature].²⁴

Despite the claims by the *Jan van Riebeeck Feeskomitee* in 1946 that it had already made considerable progress in planning for a festival, over the next two years very little was done in terms of furthering the aim of establishing Van Riebeeck with an Afrikaner character for 1952. The response from the Prime Minister's office to correspondence from the FAK was not favourable, the government refusing to lend support to a festival which it said promoted sectional interests. Any historical occasion had to be organised on a broad national basis by the government and not by a limited body like the FAK, claimed Smuts.²⁵ An executive committee of the larger *Van Riebeeck Feeskomitee* was established to respond more immediately to this and other issues which demanded urgent attention. A great deal of its time was spent on attempting to set up a meeting with Smuts in order to clarify its position, a meeting which had still not taken place by January 1948, the prime minister purportedly being otherwise engaged with overseas trips and the visit to South Africa of the British royal family.²⁶ The executive committee also sent letters to editors of Afrikaans newspapers asking them to encourage annual celebrations of Van Riebeeck Day by the '*volk*', urged affiliates to devise programmes for 6 April 1952 and laid down some guidelines for participation. The most crucial instruction was that the festival had to be primarily for the "*blanke bevolking*" [white population] and that "*rasse apartheid*" [racial apartheid] be strictly adhered to. People designated to be of mixed race, and labelled coloureds, would be allowed to participate, as long as they used Afrikaans as their "*huistaal*" [home language] and the FAK could "*veilig onderhandel*" [negotiate safely] with them. Indeed, representatives of the Dutch Reformed

²⁴Letter from Chair, *Jan Van Riebeeck-Feeskomitee* (1952) to J C Smuts, 5 April 1946, INCH, PV 202: 1/8/3/5/1.

²⁵Letter from Private Secretary of the Prime Minister to Chair of *Jan van Riebeeck Feeskomitee* (1952), 10 April 1946, INCH, PV 202: 1/8/3/5/1.

²⁶Minutes of: First Representative Meeting of the *Jan van Riebeeck Feeskomitee*, 23 August 1946; Executive Committee of *JVR Feeskomitee*, 21 January 1947; Executive Committee of *JVR Feeskomitee*, 9 August 1947; Executive Committee of *JVR Feeskomitee*, 28 January 1948, INCH, PV 202: 1/8/3/5/1.

Mission Church saw a huge potential in facilitating this participation as it could lead to the development of cultural organisations among coloureds who speak "*ons taal*" [our language], especially in the western Cape where there were about 10 000 more coloured Afrikaans speaking school children than white ones. This involvement in the festival specifically, however, was to be in separate organisations and events. Determining the nature of and facilitating the involvement with the festival would be the Dutch Reformed Mission Churches and the FAK, working within a framework expressed metaphorically as that of child/parent and master/servant.²⁷

At the same time as the FAK was planning its Van Riebeeck festival, the Cape Town City Council was setting up its own special committee to deal with Van Riebeeck and 1952. At the beginning of 1946, one of the local English language newspapers in Cape Town, the *Cape Times*, had, started promoting calls for a tercentenary festival. It reported how Cape Town City councillors were discussing the idea, it published letters from readers asserting that such a festival should surpass the Empire exhibition held in Johannesburg in 1936 and, in an editorial, called for planning to start immediately.²⁸ In March 1946, the mayor of Cape Town, acting upon an instruction from the City Council, announced that he was going to chair a committee which would approach the government "to formulate plans for a festival along national lines", an initiative which received the wholehearted support of the editor of the *Cape Times*.²⁹

It would appear that much of the correspondence and many of the claims by the FAK to be the primary organisers of a festival in 1952 were directed against this special committee, particularly since it was the City Council that had usurped the ceremony at the statue and was

²⁷Minutes, Executive Committee of *JVR Feeskomitee*, 28 January 1948; Letter, Chair *Jan Van Riebeeck-Feeskomitee* (1952) to J C Smuts, 5 April 1946; Minutes, Executive Committee of *JVR Feeskomitee*, 21 January 1947, INCH, PV 202: 1/8/3/5/1; Letters to editors of Afrikaans newspapers from *Van Riebeeck Fees Komitee*; Letters to Dutch Reformed Mission Churches from *Van Riebeeck Fees Komitee*, 19 February 1947; Letter from J G Strijdom, General Secretary Dutch Reformed Mission Church, OFS to A F Weich, Secretary, FAK, 22 February 1947, INCH, PV 202: 2/10/1/3/1; Dutch Reformed Church, *Die Koms van Jan van Riebeeck: Ramp of Redding?*, Cape Town (1952), p.5.

²⁸*Cape Times*, 4 January 1946, 7 February 1946, 11 February 1946.

²⁹*Cape Times*, 27 February 1946, 21 March 1946.

giving it a flavour that did not fully accord with Afrikaner nationalist sentiment. The notion of the 1952 festival that was being discussed in the pages of the *Cape Times* and in the Council chambers was also at odds with that being proposed by the FAK. One reader of the *Cape Times* proposed that instead of having "a definite Afrikaans colour", a Van Riebeeck festival should have "a South African colour" which would include "all sections of the population", a sentiment that was echoed by the editor and the Council's special committee.³⁰ The latter insisted that the festival be "non-political, non-sectarian and non-sectional".³¹ It is not entirely clear who comprised, in these terms, "all sections of the population", but the way in which the ideas were being couched, in terms of "British tradition" and "Afrikaans colour", would seem to indicate that the "South African colour" being referred to was white.³²

This notion of a Van Riebeeck festival embracing "all [white] sections" had a much closer affinity with the ideas of the United Party government of Jan Smuts. Apart from assuring the Van Riebeeck Society that it would provide £1 000 towards the cost of producing the diary, the government, however, did not seem to be devoting much attention to the prospect of a festival in 1952.³³ It could not find time to meet the City Council's special committee and by February 1948 had not responded to the committee's request for the government to express its views on the tercentenary. This was largely attributed by the *Cape Times* to the time that had been taken up with arranging the visit of the British royal family to South Africa in February and March 1947.³⁴ Through prioritising the royal visit, the government was not only making history in terms of recreating past events, as the trek celebrations did and as a planned Van Riebeeck festival envisaged, but also in the sense of creating first and significant occasions. From the time the royal family landed, they were making history "before our eyes": King George VI was "the first reigning monarch of England ever to set foot on South African soil", the royal cavalcade in the streets of Cape Town was the highlight of "a momentous day", the opening of parliament by the king was an "Historic event in the mother city", the

³⁰*Cape Times*, 11 February 1946, 21 March 1946.

³¹*Cape Times*, 15 April 1947.

³²*Cape Times*, 11 February 1946.

³³'The Van Riebeeck Diary: Progress Report'.

³⁴*Cape Times*, 15 April, 17 June 1947; 7 February 1948.

commando which escorted the royal family into the Transvaal town of Ermelo was "a reminder of past history as new history is made", and "a new chapter was enacted" in the history of Pretoria as "their majesties and the two princesses paid the city the honour of a personal visit". On this journey the royal family enveloped a range of symbols of the past into their epoch-making 'historical' tour, so much so that South African history was brought into their all-embracing gaze and under their supervision. They were entertained with folk dances "by young men and women descended from the Voortrekkers", were greeted by a group of Boer veterans from the South African War (1899-1902) "beneath the statue of Louis Botha", were welcomed by "witchdoctors in ancient dress and grotesquely painted faces", listened to "native children" at Lovedale mission singing about Ntsikana "one of the earliest Bantu converts to Christianity", in the "old Transvaal capital", Pretoria, they were presented with a miniature ox-wagon, and in Eshowe a 'Zulu warrior' who had fought against British armies "proudly showed [the king] a wound that he had received in the battle of Isandhlwana in 1879". The bringing together of history in these ways through the pageantry of the royal tour was a way for the government to mobilise popular support around a series of symbols which were not derived from the Afrikaner nationalist past, as had been the case with the 1938 trek, but from a setting in which the image of the British royal family was the cementing force. Very importantly, this was not cast as an imperial visit, but one of making and participating in history itself. This was no more evident than when on an "epoch-making day in South African history" the King visited the military base at Voortrekkerhoogte, wearing for the "first time ... the uniform of a Field Marshall in this country". Alongside him was Jan Smuts and "it was the first time that two field marshalls have appeared together in this country". Through the royal family, South Africans were being invited by the Smuts government to become part of and indeed to make world history with an associated set of symbols that claimed universality. The almost natural symbolism of all-embracing 'history' supposedly gave it power to counterpose, and indeed submerge, local images, which would then be cast as parochial and largely insignificant on the 'stage of world history'. The government could find little time for Van Riebeeck as the royal family "passed the [his] statue" and proceeded "on into Adderley Street" at the start of their tour.³⁵

³⁵These descriptions of the 1947 royal tour are mainly from African Mirror newsreels which were re-broadcast on South African television several months before Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip visited the 'new South Africa' in 1995. They are labelled 'Royal Tour - Episode 1' and 'Royal Tour - Episode 5'. See also

The 'historic' symbolism which Smuts and the United Party government used during the visit seemed to have mobilised popular support, the streets thronging with thousands upon thousands of cheering spectators, greeting the royal family. As part of the tour itinerary Smuts had taken his guests to Standerton, the constituency he represented in parliament. The commentator on the *African Mirror* newsreel called this a proud moment for both Smuts and his constituents, for seldom had "a politician in any country been able to bring such honour to those who have supported him so staunchly".³⁶ On 24 April, when the royal family departed, it was Van Riebeeck who, lifting his hat as he gazed out to sea, bade them farewell, with the words: "Not Good-bye but '*Tot siens*'" [au revoir]. On his statue the dates 1652 and 1947 were now imaginatively inscribed, as if the royal visit symbolised the culmination of a past which he begun (see illustration 3).³⁷

This support for the government among those who were allowed to vote proved to be more apparent than real. Just over a year later, the United Party was voted out of office by many of the same people who had come out to wave the British flag and extend "their own warm welcome" to the royals.³⁸ The "staunch supporters" in Standerton voted for the Nationalist Party candidate in their constituency, Wentzel du Plessis, who defeated Smuts by 224 votes. The drawing power of the universal historic imagery which Smuts and the royal family had brought with them was tenuous. It was not easy to dissociate the royal family from a British imperial imagery, especially when the essential core of the Afrikaner nationalist past which had been constructed over the past 50 years had been based upon the fight against imperial control. Even though former enemies of British imperial forces had greeted the king, the leaders of the Nationalist Party were not on hand to welcome the royal family when they arrived in Cape Town.³⁹ Moreover, there was no resonance with a local identity and past that the universal historic symbolism was able to draw upon. The royal visit had not been able to sustain a national past that enveloped all within a (British) commonwealth and it was the anti-

the *Cape Times*, 22, 28 February, 3, 20 March 1947.

³⁶African Mirror: 'The Royal Tour', Episode 5.

³⁷*Cape Times*, 24 April 1947.

³⁸African Mirror, 'The Royal Tour', Episode 1.

³⁹*Cape Times*, 20 February 1947.



“Not Good-bye but ‘Tot Siens’ ”
—He speaks for all South Africa.

Figure 3: “Not Good-bye, but ‘Tot Siens’”, *Cape Times*, 24 April 1947.

imperial history of 'The Great Trek' and a still somewhat ill-defined racial policy termed apartheid - which vacillated between total removal of African labour from 'white' areas and a more limited notion of the government introducing stricter measures to control the 'necessary' African labour - that emerged triumphant among the largely white electorate.⁴⁰

The Nationalist Party victory did not immediately provide a boost for the public past of Jan van Riebeeck. It was the cross-class alliance among whites with an identity determined as Afrikaans, and a past written as a struggle for freedom, that had provided the basis for the success of the Nationalist Party and that needed to be continually reinforced in the initial phases of its rule. The opening of the Voortrekker Monument near Pretoria in 1949 provided the ideal platform to re-enact the pageantry of 1938 and to strengthen the associated symbols of what was proclaimed to be the "*Grootste Fees in die Geskiedenis*" [Biggest Festival in History].⁴¹ In very much the same vein as the ox-wagons had trekked from various parts of the country to Pretoria in 1938, a group of *rapprortryers* [despatch riders], based upon the commando system used by Boer armies, brought messages from the *volk* in "*afgelee plekke*" [distant places] to the monument, stirring up "*geesdriften volksgevoel*" [enthusiasm and national feeling] in the process.⁴² Between 14 and 16 December, at the monument itself a series of historical tableaux were performed as part of a "mighty festive symphony with vast movements", with the emphasis on a *volksgeskiedenis* [volk's history] which moved from "*Stryd tot Oorwinning*" [Struggle to Victory]. They took the audience on a journey with the trekkers from the time that the trek leader Piet Retief had met and been killed by the Zulu king, Dingaan, to the "Freedom Flags" of the independent Boer republics and the "scenes of

⁴⁰This is not to deny that there were many other factors that contributed to the Nationalist Party election victory in 1948. Much has been written on these issues, but, apart from focusing on the 1938 Trek centenary celebrations, little has been said on the contested nature of the imagery. It is almost as if there is a presumed straight line between 1938 and 1948 with no sense of how the voortrekker past had to compete with other pasts, especially with the royal visit being such a recent occurrence. The analysis presented here is similar to the point that Raphael Samuel makes in his critique of the concept of the 'invention of tradition'. He argues that changes in public attitudes are not inventions, but are underpinned by a "great mass of pre-existing public sentiment" (Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, p.307). It would appear that in this specific instance, the mass of public sentiment around the royal visit was not in any way sufficient to alter local identities, which had been assembled in the past half century and more. For differing conceptions of apartheid among Afrikaner nationalist circles, see Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*, pp.49-60.

⁴¹'Voortrekkermonument Byvoegsel', *Die Burger*, 10 December 1949.

⁴²Rapportryers-Reelingskomitee, *Die Rapportboek van die Rapportryers*, Johannesburg (1949), p.3.

mourning" after the defeat of the Boer armies by the British in the South African War of 1899-1902, and ended with victory in "The Present" with the opening of the monument in 1949.⁴³

The highlight of the proceedings in 1949 came when, at midday, the rays of the sun bore down through an opening in the roof of the monument onto a cenotaph bearing the inscription "*Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika*" [We for thee, South Africa]. D F Malan, the prime minister, asserting that these words should now become "engraved deeply and indelibly on the heart of every Afrikaner" gave the signal for six boys and six girls dressed in Victorian garb representing trek outfits, to open the doors of the huge granite monument designed to eulogise the Voortrekker past. Inside the monument was an historical frieze sculptured out of marble, representing 27 selected episodes in a history of the trek from the time of departure from the Cape to the establishment of independent Boer republics in 1852. In these scenes of "trials and tribulations", "sacrifice and suffering", all culminating in a predetermined "logical conclusion" of an independent South African Republic, the frieze was intended to document and set forever in marble "the Afrikaner's proprietary right to South Africa".⁴⁴

Yet, for all its associations with sustaining an Afrikaner past and identity, there were indications at the proceedings of the inauguration and the symbols contained within the monument that the voortrekkers were now being used to construct more than just an Afrikaner nationhood. At this particular point in its history, it was becoming increasingly important not just to "reinforce the superiority of white Afrikanerdom", as Delmont claims, but to promote the cause of a broader exclusive white South African nationalism.⁴⁵ The hold which the Nationalist Party had on state power, just over a year after the election, was extremely fragile. This was not only because of the narrowness of its election victory, but was also a result of the pressure it was under to come up with a policy that would deal with the growth in African

⁴³Official Programme for the Inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument, December 13 to 16, 1949, Voortrekker Monument Inauguration Committee, Pretoria (1949), pp.14-15; M C Botha, 'The Inauguration' in *The Voortrekker Monument Pretoria: Official Guide*, Pretoria, nd, p.71.

⁴⁴G Moerdijk, 'The Historical Frieze' and G Moerdijk, 'Design and Symbolism of the Afrikaner Monument' in *The Voortrekker Monument Pretoria: Official Guide*, pp.51, 34.

⁴⁵E Delmont, 'The Voortrekker Monument: Monolith to Myth', *South African Historical Journal*, 29 (November 1993), p.101.

urbanisation and the accompanying upsurge in political militancy in the 1940s, perceived by most whites as an imminent threat to the supremacy that they had taken for granted. In this tenuous position the "quest for legitimacy across [white] class lines" became a crucial component of Nationalist political strategy, playing a major role in formulating Apartheid policy and a history and identity for whites as whites which reinforced and authenticated their notions of supremacy.⁴⁶ The Voortrekker past that had been produced since the 1870s was not ideal for these purposes, as it set itself against other white identities, but at the same time it was the most imminent History that Nationalists could draw on, as was evident at the opening of the monument. A keynote speaker, Justice J C Newton Thompson, was specially selected by the festival organisers to represent what was designated as the English speaking component of the South African white population at the inauguration. Speaking just before the main address by D F Malan, he called on "both sections [which] are originally descendant from ... European civilization" to come together so that it would be possible to speak of the "white community" as "the South African nation". The crowd of some 250 000 responded with rapturous applause to his speech.⁴⁷ D F Malan spoke of the Voortrekkers as having blazed the trail of an independent South African nationhood based upon the maintenance of white paramountcy and white race purity.⁴⁸ Inside the monument itself, one of the 27 friezes which were displayed on the interior walls depicted a little known historical scene in which a representative of the English speaking settler community at Grahamstown handed over a bible to the trek leader Jacobus Uys. Although he did not hand over the bible personally, present at the scene was William Rowland Thompson, the frontier merchant who was an ancestor of Justice Newton Thompson, thus linking a past joined together in the trek with a present and a future of whites tied together by the monument. In this respect the monument became a symbol of the whiteness borne by the Voortrekkers, who repeated endless colonial progressions into the 'darkness' of the African interior through their journey of conquest. Through this journey, the Voortrekkers, in 1949, became the 'true founders' of white South Africa, outstripping potential all-comers, including Van Riebeeck.

⁴⁶D Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*, p.270. Posel's book, as the title indicates, deals with the contests over the formulation of Apartheid policy, focusing on influx control. She does not look, however, at how establishing a white identity and a past was also central to the conception and maintenance of Apartheid.

⁴⁷J Newton Thompson, *The Story of a House*, Cape Town (1968), pp.132-3.

⁴⁸*The Star*, 16 December 1949; *Cape Times*, 17 December 1949.

The Voortrekkers' great deed was the founding of White States on the highland of South Africa. Long before them the Phoenicians, the Romans and the Portuguese tried in vain to tame Southern Africa. Even the Hollanders, after Jan van Riebeeck, did not penetrate far beyond the coastal belt.

But the Voortrekker, with his wife and family, became in very truth the founder of a white race in Southern Africa.

It is this establishment of a white race which is a deed worthy of commemoration, especially when it be compared with the conquest of Mexico by Cortez, which was a remarkable achievement but which resulted in the rise of a mixed race of Europeans and aborigines.⁴⁹

What seems to be the crucial component to the monumentalising of the Voortrekker past is that the voortrekkers are being identified as the carriers of the pure white race. It is not an individual but the generic 'Voortrekker, wife and family' who, as an entity, enable the process of pure breeding to continue across the frontier of race. Van Riebeeck, the lone man on the coastal plains, could not be the founder of white South Africa in the past of the Voortrekker monument without his family to accompany him.

In as much as the royal family was not quite able to dissociate itself from its imperial past, it was not easy for the Voortrekker past to cement a white nationalist identity and an anti-imperial history. Many of those whom the Nationalists sought to incorporate within the monument could not associate themselves with a history that was, at its core, based upon a struggle against people whom they related to as ancestors. Although a great deal of enthusiasm was expressed in sections of the English language press for the way that the proceedings were a display of "goodwill" and "unity" - *The Star* newspaper in Johannesburg published a special booklet comprising a series of articles on the "Great Trek" and photographs from the inauguration, that told an "heroic story ... which ... stirs the English-speaking South African also, because these Voortrekkers are our people" - there was some unease about the "high pitch of Afrikaner fervour" evident in the celebrations, the way that the Voortrekker past was being portrayed as the main event in South African history, and how this was being linked to the struggle against the "mighty enemy from Europe" in the South African War.⁵⁰ The historical tableau which depicted the plundering of Boer farms by British

⁴⁹G Moerdijk, 'The Voortrekker Monument' in *Official Programme for the Inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument*, p.44.

⁵⁰*Cape Times*, 17 and 15 December 1949; *The Star*, 14 December 1949; J Bond, *The Saga of The Great Trek and Pictorial Record of Inaugural Celebrations at the Voortrekker Monument at Pretoria, December 1949*,

forces and the grief of Boer women in the war was criticised for opening up old wounds and being at odds with the theme of the monument, "*Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika*" [We for thee South Africa].⁵¹ In addition to this, the view of the voortrekkers as conveyors of civilisation and progress was not one which had been at the forefront of depictions of the trek by many historians who had written in English. Indeed, they had portrayed the trekkers as "rude frontiersmen" who had "fled to the wilderness" once they had been confronted with the "light" of "civilisation" which the British had ignited from the "torch of enlightenment carried ashore by Van Riebeeck". *The Star's* special inauguration booklet also referred to the voortrekkers as having developed "prejudices" and "limitations" as a result of their "long isolation on the old Cape frontier".⁵² The ambivalence towards the proceedings and the monument itself was expressed in a cartoon which appeared in the *Cape Times* on 17 December 1949. On a scroll, a map of South Africa appeared, the top part of which contained a likeness of the monument with the year 1949 AD inscribed on it. On the bottom portion of the map there was a large question mark with the years 2000-3000 AD written next to it (see illustration 4).⁵³ The future of the Voortrekker past was clearly not one that the cartoonist of the *Cape Times* felt secure in. To establish a white past required a much more ambiguous ancestry than the Voortrekker monument could provide, but which at the same time still maintained a substantial historical record. Van Riebeeck and his many histories were in a sense eminently suitable for this role and even though he did not yet have a prominent family with which to land at Granger Bay, the coincidence of the 300th year since his landing provided the ideal moment to claim another set of historical events as the basis of a white identity.

Even while planning for the inauguration of the Voortrekker monument was taking place the FAK's *Van Riebeeck-Feeskomitee* was starting to change its direction, in the wake of the 1948 election victory of the Nationalist Party. Chaired by the minister of Native Affairs, E G Jansen, the committee suggested to the new government that a proposed Van Riebeeck festival

Johannesburg (1950), p.40.

⁵¹*The Star*, 14 December 1949.

⁵²N Etherington, 'Old Wine in New Bottles: The Persistence of Narrative Structures in the Historiography of the Mfecane and the Great Trek', in C Hamilton (ed), *The Mfecane Aftermath*, Johannesburg (1996), p.37; Bond, *The Saga of The Great Trek*, p.40.

⁵³*Cape Times*, 17 December 1949.

assume a national character by drawing the 'races' together to organise and participate in the anticipated events. Races, in these terms, bore no reference to a biological essence, but to what was deemed to be an ancestry based on language and culture, one related to an Afrikaans speaking world, the other to an English-speaking one. Assuming the mantle of representative of the 'race' of Afrikaans speaking whites, the FAK recommended that the government appoint a Central Committee to organise a "national festival" in 1952 incorporating the executive of the FAK's own committee, the administrators of the provinces, G Siemelink (from the ANV), T B Davie (the vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town) and four English speakers. This committee, it was envisaged, would organise the festivities on a "nation wide" basis and also seek out the co-operation of groupings in Holland. A Cape Town committee, with representatives from "*belanghebbende bevolkingsgroepe in Kaapstad*" [interested population groups in Cape Town] would be responsible for arranging a series of events in the city, which would provide the main stage for Van Riebeeck, his landing and his past.⁵⁴ Through these committees the festival would celebrate a commonality of all whites as a distinct nation with their joint past derived out of Europe and Van Riebeeck, which would set them apart from and above the 'uncivilised' natives of Africa.

In order not to distract from the inauguration of the Voortrekker monument, these plans were deliberately kept under wraps until 1950. To keep the recommendations alive, though, representatives from the FAK's committee met and corresponded regularly with government ministers. There was some concern that if the government did not go ahead and appoint a festival committee, it would lose the initiative as there was already some talk of the Cape Town Chamber of Industries deciding to stage a large exhibition on its own.⁵⁵ To facilitate the planning process, the FAK extended invitations to a broader range of participants to constitute a *Bree Komitee van die Van Riebeeck Feeskomitee* [Extended Committee of the Van Riebeeck Festival Committee] to meet with the minister of the interior, T E Donges on 10 March 1950. At this gathering Donges said that the government was totally supportive of

⁵⁴Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Jan van Riebeeck-Feeskomitee, 9 Feb 1949, INCH, PV 202: 1/8/3/5/1.

⁵⁵Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Jan van Riebeeck-Feeskomitee, 9 Feb 1949, INCH, PV 202: 1/8/3/5/1; Letter from E G Jansen, Minister of Native Affairs to T E Donges, Minister of Interior, 29 June 1949; Letter from C F Albertyn to T E Donges, 15 September 1949, CA, Donges collection, A1646, vol 338.

WHITHER, SOUTH AFRICA?

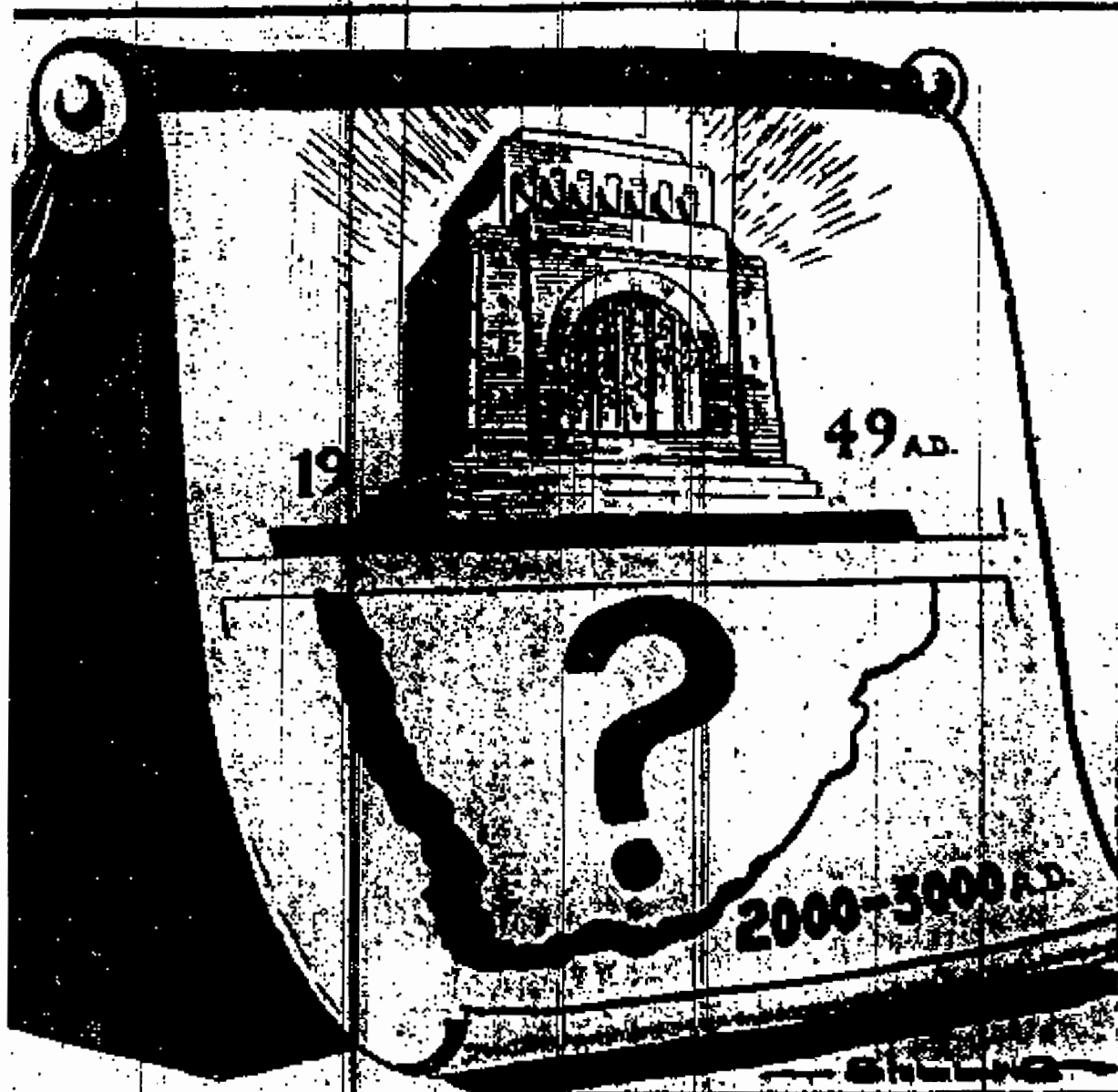


Figure 4: "Whither, South Africa?", *Cape Times*, 17 December 1949.

the plans that were emerging from the FAK for a Van Riebeeck festival. Not only would it appoint the Central and Cape Town committees on the basis recommended by the FAK - in the latter it was also deemed necessary to include a "*paar dames*" [few ladies] as well - but it went further and pledged government financial backing for the organisation of the celebrations by these committees.⁵⁶ Clearly the government perceived that by according significance to Van Riebeeck and by assuming a leading role in enabling his landing and his past to take place, it might strengthen its claims to legitimacy.

Almost a month later, to coincide with the annual commemoration of the landing, Donges issued a press release announcing that the government would lend support to a Van Riebeeck tercentenary festival to be held in 1952. The central arena for such a festival, Donges declared, would be Cape Town, a move of which the local English daily, the *Cape Times*, enthusiastically approved as it proclaimed the city to be "the very place where those early settlers established and consolidated a beach-head for Western civilization in a continent that was undoubtedly a dark one". A 16 person Cape Town committee, nominated by the minister, would be convened immediately by the mayor, with representation from the English, Afrikaans and Dutch speaking communities, in order to set plans in motion for the festival.⁵⁷ To a large degree this committee was an attempt to amalgamate the two groupings which had been at loggerheads over proposals for a Van Riebeeck festival in the late 1940s, the Cape Town City Council and the FAK, with the government, which, for all its Afrikaner nationalist associations, represented as the neutral arbiter and the cementing force.

Further than announcing that a central committee would be appointed later to coordinate the festivities throughout the country, Donges gave little indication at this stage of the proposed content that a Van Riebeeck festival would take. In spite of his emergence in commemorations, textbooks and the diary, Van Riebeeck was not a character that automatically evoked a set of associated historic events and it was to be left in the hands of the committees to plan his past. Sections of the English and Afrikaans press immediately

⁵⁶Minutes of the first meeting of the Bree Kommittee van die Van Riebeeck Feeskommittee, 10 March 1950, CA, A1646, vol 338.

⁵⁷*Cape Times*, 6 April 1950.

began to suggest and speculate over the nature of the proposed events for Van Riebeeck. There were suggestions that a monument be built on Signal Hill, Dutch warships call in on Table Bay and that a group of direct descendants of Van Riebeeck visit the Cape. One of the most talked about and extravagant ideas was that Van Riebeeck should set sail again from the Netherlands, re-creating his voyage three hundred years previously, emulating Henry Hudson who had sailed to New York in 1909 to participate in the 300th anniversary celebration of the city organised by the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society.⁵⁸ In all these suggestions the central focus was upon establishing a European and specifically Dutch ancestry with little direct association with a local national past which followed.

This shifting of the direction for the Van Riebeeck festival was not received with unanimity within Afrikaner nationalist circles. M C Botha, who was the organiser of the '49 inauguration of the Voortrekker monument, and who was touted as the organiser of the Van Riebeeck festival,⁵⁹ expressed the fear that by attempting to be an inclusive white occasion, it would water down the emerging trend towards establishing an Afrikaner ancestry through Van Riebeeck and the Dutch, which historians like S F N Gie had promoted.⁶⁰ Disregarding any conflict that occurred between settlers and the Dutch East India Company, as well as the changing nature of the 'Dutch inheritance', it was claimed that the Dutch culture borne by Van Riebeeck was so strong that it was able to maintain itself through the period of British colonial rule in the nineteenth century, to emerge triumphant, in the form of the 'Afrikaner nation' in the twentieth century. In terms of this logic a Van Riebeeck festival should be a celebration of this supposed Dutch/Afrikaner linkage, where 'the English' would be represented but would play a "*ondergeskikte rol*" [subordinate role].⁶¹

Botha must have felt that his worst fears of the festival losing an Afrikaner nationalist flavour with a Dutch heritage were being realised when the Cape Town committee began to meet and

⁵⁸*Cape Times*, 6 and 7 April 1950; *Die Burger*, 6 April 1950; *Die Suiderstem*, 6 April 1950; Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, p.65.

⁵⁹*Die Burger*, 6 April 1950.

⁶⁰See chapter one for a discussion on the trend which emerged in the twentieth century to give Afrikaners a specific European ancestry.

⁶¹M C Botha to E G Jansen, Minister of Native Affairs, 13 June 1950, INCH, PV 202: 2/10/1/3/3.

consider ideas for the central theme. There were some 39 proposals, and although many of them referred to specific events rather than an overarching thematic conceptualisation, there was little to suggest that an Afrikaner/Dutch lineage was being considered seriously. Proposals ranged from the establishment of a Tercentenary Tuberculosis Trust⁶² to staging a motor car Grand Prix, restoring and preserving buildings, exhibiting books, painting and photographs, holding a wine festival, re-enacting Van Riebeeck's landing and constructing a Dutch village to declaring South Africa a republic. Probably closest to Botha's conceptualisation of the festival were the recommendations for a pageant of the past re-enacting events from Van Riebeeck to the present and the idea that a genealogical record of old Cape families be compiled as a national monument. While the executive of the Cape Town committee - which labelled itself the Tercentenary Action Committee - did not rule out any of these proposals, it initially favoured as the central theme the establishment of a Health Fund and the construction of a concert hall on Cape Town's foreshore. The latter was regarded as eminently advantageous to some members of the committee as not only would it have symbolic significance in making Van Riebeeck into a Christopher Columbus "marking the transfer of the culture of the Old World into the new" but it could be used, could raise money and, unlike the Voortrekker Celebrations, would present a "living" monument.⁶³

Setting up Van Riebeeck against the Voortrekker Monument in such a way was undoubtedly to raise the ire of the promoters of Afrikaner nationalism. Even before the Cape Town committee had met to consider the various proposals, M C Botha from the FAK had called upon the government to relegate this committee to the status of local organisers.⁶⁴ Donges, to avert any clash which might occur over the theme and to ensure that the Cape Town committee would not undermine any plans the government might have, moved hastily and appointed the Central committee to be chaired by E J Jansen, the minister of Native Affairs, which would "coordinate all [Van Riebeeck] festivals in the Union and abroad".⁶⁵ Although

⁶²Minutes, Meeting of Cape Town Tercentenary Committee, 28 June 1950, CA, A1646, vol 338.

⁶³Minutes of Tercentenary Action Committee, 17 July 1950, INCH, PV 202: 2/10/1/3/3.

⁶⁴M C Botha to E G Jansen, Minister of Native Affairs, 13 June 1950, INCH, PV 202: 2/10/1/3/3.

⁶⁵*Cape Times*, 7 August 1950; *Die Burger*, 7 August 1950. Jansen was later replaced by A J van der Merwe, the moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church.

the relationship between this committee and the Cape Town one was never spelt out, it became apparent that the Central group would take decisions on what it considered to be 'national' matters, such as the theme, and the Cape Town group would concern itself with submitting proposals and making arrangements for events in the city. The *Cape Times*, expressed slight misgivings over this move, hoping that the central committee would not become the "plaything of small-minded sectionalism" as it claimed had occurred during the Voortrekker celebrations. *The Argus* was also hesitant about these 'sections' emerging on the committee but expressed its reservations more in terms of how it conceptualised the festival rather than by raising possible doubts. It presented the Van Riebeeck festival as a moment of reconciliation, in which differences would be forgotten to recall and relive "the long gone days which were the beginnings of White civilization in South Africa", casting the intervening period into the abyss of collective amnesia for the history of the 'white nation' to emerge.⁶⁶

A notable shift in discussions over the envisaged composition of Van Riebeeck in 1952 took place immediately after the appointment of the central committee. It was not so much that the conceptualisation of the festival took on an Afrikaner nationalist aura, as the *Cape Times* feared it might, but the idea that Van Riebeeck had to be constituted as in some way as a figure with a national past became the focus of deliberations around a "basic principle".⁶⁷ Echoing the shift in direction of the FAK, Dr C F Albertyn, from the Afrikaans publishing house Nasionale Pers, and editor of the magazine for the Voortrekker youth movement, *Die Jongspan*, who was on both committees, suggested that the "spiritual" theme be "We Build a Nation". In this schema South Africa consisted of two nations, English and Afrikaans speaking whites, who would be united through Van Riebeeck, with settlers and settlement forming the basis of an "indigenous" festival.⁶⁸

Ons het gedoen gehad met die mense wat hier geland het. Almal wat daar gewees het was afstamelling van mense wat hier op die suidpunt beland het na Van Riebeeck 'n halfweg stasie begin het. [We were concerned with the people

⁶⁶*Cape Times*, 7 August 1950; *Cape Argus*, 7 August 1950.

⁶⁷Minutes, Tercentenary Action Committee, 17 August and 26 September 1950, INCH, PV 202, 1/8/3/5/2.

⁶⁸Minutes, Tercentenary Action Committee, 17 August 1950, INCH, PV 202, 1/8/3/5/2; Radio talk by T E Donges in connection with the Van Riebeeck Festival, 28 September 1951, SABC, 28/93(51). See full script of talk in CA, A1646, vol 339.

who landed here. Everyone who was there had descended from people who had landed on the southerly point of Africa after Van Riebeeck began his halfway station.]⁶⁹

To effect this theme in practical terms, Albertyn suggested that each visitor carry to Cape Town a stone of a specified size which would then be used to build a monument.⁷⁰ By the time the central committee had its first meeting at the beginning of September, though, no final decision had been reached about Albertyn's proposed theme, or any other for the festival, and it was concluded that Van Riebeeck would have to wait for written proposals to be submitted before his future and his past could be resolved for 1952.⁷¹

The Cape Town Committee, now under pressure to present a 'national' theme, relegated the idea of a concert hall to a local issue and in its place presented a revised proposal with Table Mountain as the focus of the festival. Fitting in with the concept of 'founding', it presented Table Mountain to the central committee as the "monument" with an ancestry based upon a European gaze, "seen by Sir Francis Drake and by the early seafarers" and where "Van Riebeeck laid the foundations of a new nation under its protective walls". It was not only these European antecedents which appealed to the Cape Town committee, but also the way in which Table Mountain was able to couple this ancestry with a sense of being indigenous. The mountain was conceptualised as "our incomparable heritage", a "national temple" which should be protected and preserved. As part of the conservation of the past and celebration of Van Riebeeck's landing, the committee suggested that the "noxious weed Haxea" should be removed from the mountain and that there be a planting ceremony of indigenous trees on its slopes. Albertyn's scheme of everyone bringing a stone to Cape Town to build a monument could also be incorporated into this format as the stones could become part of the walls of a summer house to be erected on the mountain. In an almost contradictory sense, to

⁶⁹Interview with C F Albertyn, member of the Cape Town Action Committee for the Van Riebeeck Festival, 25 August 1994.

⁷⁰Minutes, Tercentenary Action Committee, 17 August 1950, INCH, PV 202, 1/8/3/5/2.

⁷¹Minutes of the first meeting of Central Committee, Van Riebeeck Festival, 8 September 1950, INCH, PV 202, 1/8/3/5/1.

commemorate Van Riebeeck was seen as a way to return to and replant the seeds of a native history with a European past.⁷²

Although this theme held more appeal to the Central Committee than the envisaged concert hall, it was still one that was seen in local rather than national terms. Its appeal was considered to be one that would not define and sustain a national past as the Cape Town committee suggested it would. The mountain could be imaged "as sacrosanct in the hearts of the people"⁷³ but its associations were overwhelmingly related to a specific city and the way it constituted its inhabitants in terms which were sometimes very antagonistic to an Afrikaner nationalist identity. Table Mountain could thus be considered, along with various other themes, as forming part of the Van Riebeeck festival, but the central committee would not entertain the idea of it forming the central theme.⁷⁴

The rejection of Table Mountain did not mean that the government was intent upon sponsoring a festival for Van Riebeeck where "the historic emotions of 1938 were ... due to be repeated in a slightly different medium" and where Afrikaners were called upon to display solidarity with the Nationalist Party.⁷⁵ There were three crucial problems associated with developing a tercentenary festival with an exclusive "*Afrikaanse strekking*" [Afrikaans outreach].⁷⁶ The first was that it might not be able to sustain the response of 1949, given its closeness in time to the previous commemoration. Secondly, the figure of Van Riebeeck, the company servant, was not immensely popular within Afrikaner nationalist circles where the Dutch East India Company had been portrayed in its past as the enemy of the burgher farmers. Finally, the power base afforded by a white Afrikaner nationalism was always going to be a severely limited one. Maintaining power in a context of racial exclusivity meant that

⁷²Letter from Chair of Cape Town Committee to Secretary, Central Committee, Van Riebeeck Festival, 4 October 1950, INCH, PV 202, 2/10/1/3/4.

⁷³Letter from Chair of Cape Town Committee to Secretary Central committee, Van Riebeeck Festival, 4 October 1950.

⁷⁴Minutes, Meeting of Executive Committee of Van Riebeeck Festival, 16 October 1950, US, Thom, Box 49.

⁷⁵Keppel-Jones, *When Smuts Goes*, p.3.

⁷⁶M C Botha to E G Jansen, Minister of Native Affairs, 13 June 1950, INCH, PV 202: 2/10/1/3/3.

it was necessary to draw other pasts and identities into constituting a white nation. The coincidence of 1952 provided the ideal stage to promote a racially based nationalism in which the anti-imperial symbolic baggage associated with the 'Great Trek' could be incorporated and attuned to a broader exclusive racial past. Albertyn's proposal of a festival that commemorated European settlement and its past delineated between 1652 and 1952 was very much in line with this thinking. In October 1950 the central committee decided that "South Africa After 300 Years: We Build a Nation" was to be the theme of a tercentenary festival in 1952, where a past of "ancestral immigrants" emanating from Van Riebeeck would be created as a "symbol of national unity", asserting simultaneously both racial power and exclusivity.⁷⁷

Negotiating and authorising Van Riebeeck's past

The key modernising alibi which the Central Committee presented for Van Riebeeck to declare this racial power for a nation designated as his descendants was that the festival was "to show 300 years of civilisation in South Africa".⁷⁸ A white South African nation defined in and through the festival would become the bearer of the "torch of Western Civilisation to this southern corner of Africa", following which it had "matured over 300 years".⁷⁹ In this conceptualisation it was progress, derived from Europe, which started the past and then went through a process of maturation to move inexorably towards its "own way of life and its own mission".⁸⁰ Depicting this process of beginning, progression and achievement of a self-proclaimed separate nationhood for Van Riebeeck, became the organising principle for the events of 1952.

⁷⁷Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committee of Van Riebeeck Festival, 16 October 1950, 3 November 1950, US, Thom, Box 49; *Cape Times*, 7 November 1950.

⁷⁸Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committee of Van Riebeeck Festival, 3 November 1950, US, Thom, Box 49.

⁷⁹*Official Festival Programme*, p.7.

⁸⁰*Official Festival Programme*, p.7.

The central committee planning the festival incorporated some of the suggestions that had already been made previous to the decision on an all embracing theme, into the schematic conceptualisation of the specific events. With the need to show beginning and progress, a major focus, the committee decided, was going to be on the past, with a series of historical exhibitions. Among other items, these involved a reconstruction of the Dromedaris and the landing of Van Riebeeck, a show depicting highlights of South African history over 300 years, and, in order to make the festival into a spatially national event, it was planned to recreate the journeys of progression that had occurred during the Voortrekker celebrations by having mail coaches travel to Cape Town from different areas of the country. To present the achievement that had derived from this past, a large exhibition or festival fair was envisaged which would display the economic structure of 'the nation' as being based upon agriculture, industry and mining. Complementing the more "material" "picture of how far we have we have progressed as a nation", there would be depictions of cultural 'advancement'. Art exhibitions, musical concerts, dramatic performances, youth displays and sporting competitions would take place in Cape Town throughout February and March 1952, much of it centring on the Castle which was proclaimed to be "South Africa's oldest and most memorable building". The proposal that Table Mountain become the central theme of the festival was also merged into this jam-packed programme. The organisers signalled their intention to have Table Mountain declared a national monument, linking 'the nation' not merely with a European past but rooting it in a "symbol ... of conservation" in a ceremony of "Dedication to the Soil".⁸¹

Presenting a past for Van Riebeeck was no easy matter. The initial problem was the form that a public performance of the past should take. In 1910 an historical pageant had been held at a designated venue, and in debates over the programme for the 1952 festival it was recalled as a "magnificent show" which could serve as an appropriate model to emulate for the way it linked the performers with their direct ancestors.⁸² Similarly, at both the laying of the foundation stone and the inauguration of the Voortrekker monument, a series of historical

⁸¹Minutes of Meetings of Executive Committee of Van Riebeeck Festival, 3 November 1950, US, Thom, Box 49; *Official Festival Programme*, pp.11, 23, 68. The festival fair is discussed in detail in chapter four and the journey of the mail coaches in chapter five.

⁸²Parliamentary Hansard, House of Assembly Debates, 8 February 1951, p.908.

tableaux had been performed. Many of the initial suggestions made to the Cape Town committee in 1950 had favoured the revival of this format with the general idea being to present selected moments in a history, thereby establishing in the public vista a sense of identity that was defined both in a particular space, the place of South Africa, and a linear sequence of a determined historical time that led from Van Riebeeck's landing to the present of 1952. The pageant thus extended the notion of locating individuals in commemorative time specified by a singular ceremony and/or designated holiday to one where an extended past became the focus of establishing a public identity in a history where parts were carefully chosen, scripted and rehearsed.⁸³ Moreover, the pageant also involved notions of much more public participation, where the crowds of onlookers could respond almost immediately to an array of visual images. One proposer of this scheme, A J Bosman, was so enthusiastic about it, that she sent the committee a list containing "pageant procedure" derived from the experience of pageants that were held in the USA.⁸⁴ Yet the problem with pageant format, as was the case in the USA in the early parts of the twentieth century when pageants were a very popular form of commemorative celebrations, was that the carnival atmosphere might prove to be so overwhelming that the occasion would lose its aura of the genuine 'historic'. The outside stage also made it difficult to effect a serious ambience which would enable the performers to concentrate the audience's attention on the historic scenes. While dramas had been re-enacted at the Voortrekker celebrations, the emphasis had been on public talks, with speeches drawing upon historical episodes to establish and sustain an image of a united *volk* to which every Afrikaner owed his/her undivided loyalty. In considering the appropriate forms for staging the past in 1952, members of the government insisted that it maintain a sense of solemnity as "an historical occasion". The festival was to be "devotion to the past" and should not be turned into a carnival or a "national fair".⁸⁵ For the organisers of the Van Riebeeck festival this meant that, much like their American counterparts some fifty years previously, they had to decide "how ... they [could] elicit the enthusiasm and cheers ...

⁸³P Merrington, 'Masques, Monuments and Masons: the 1910 Pageant of the Union of South Africa', unpublished paper presented at the South African and Contemporary History Seminar, University of the Western Cape, 21 May 1996, p.3. The linear and spatial imagery of pageants is discussed in relation to American pageants in Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, p.1.

⁸⁴'Schedule of suggestions submitted for consideration by Action Committee arising out of public appeal', Annexure to Minutes Tercentenary Action Committee, 17 July 1950, INCH, PV 202: 2/10/1/3/3.

⁸⁵Parliamentary Hansard, House of Assembly Debates, 8 February 1951, pp.913, 917.

without sacrificing the marrow of patriotic and moral exhortation customarily put forth in the historical oration".⁸⁶ The Afrikaans dramatist Anna Neethling-Pohl, who had organised historical tableaux for the 1938 Voortrekker festival, was adamant that, given these sorts of problems and the difficulties in achieving an adequate response, she would never again become involved in a similar sort of production.⁸⁷

Yet, in spite of all her protestations, Anna Neethling-Pohl was cajoled into becoming the organiser of the historical pageant for the 1952 Van Riebeeck festival and seconded from the South African Broadcasting Corporation for a year to carry out this function.⁸⁸ Her previous experience in 1938, her association with Afrikaans drama and her study of pageantry abroad - in 1949 she had toured Europe, observing many pageants and speaking to their organisers - made her seem the most eminently suitable choice of the Van Riebeeck festival pageant sub-committee. But Neethling-Pohl was insistent that, based upon her experience and her study of pageants, the various historical tableaux could not be presented on stage in the form of singular episodes. When she appeared in May 1951 before the pageant committee, which had been assigned the task of ensuring that a national past would be displayed in April 1952, she instead outlined plans for a procession of history through the streets of Cape Town. The advantage of such a schema, she maintained, was that it was able to display singular episodes within a holistic past, in which history became a flowing river that united its tributaries into a 'nation' that grew and developed as the procession wound its way through the streets in a sequence that, like the textbook past, was one of "*oorsake ... en gevolge*" [causes and results]. The seamless, developmental nature of the moving pageant would also give a sense of an inevitable progression to a history that was selected, presented and carefully laid out so as to become "*onveranderbaar*" [unchangeable].⁸⁹ This clearly fitted in with Calvinist notions of

⁸⁶Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, p.40.

⁸⁷A Neethling-Pohl to M Pienaar and S Hunter, Chairs of the Pageant Sub-Committee, Van Riebeeck Festival, 5 May 1952, CA, A 1657, vol 322.

⁸⁸J C Pauw, Organising secretary, Van Riebeeck festival to Secretary, SABC, 9 February 1951, US, Thom, Box 49.

⁸⁹A Neethling-Pohl to M Pienaar and S Hunter, 5 May 1952.

predestination which in many ways informed Afrikaner nationalist political ideologies.⁹⁰ But the format of history in the moving pageant was not conceived of in such limited terms by Neethling-Pohl. By gazing on this episodic, sequential, preordained, moving past she envisaged that members of the crowd who gathered in the streets would be able to recognise, with a feeling of "*vreugde*" [joy], their specific place in a collective history that had become visually knowable and forever fixed as "*ons geskiedenis*" [our history]. Through the procession of the past, the onlookers could come to identify themselves as "*burgers van Suid-Afrika*" [citizens of South Africa].⁹¹

The major problem with this type of moving history in the gaze of the general public was that, in spite of Neethling-Pohl's determination to have it tightly secured, there was little control over the way in which the crowd constituted itself and how it identified with the events in the procession. This was a problem she was not unaware of. Soon after she arrived in Cape Town to organise the pageant for the Van Riebeeck festival, she witnessed a demonstration by the Torch Commando, an organisation originally constituted by ex- World War Two servicemen, who were protesting against plans by the Nationalist Party government to eliminate coloureds who still had the franchise in the Cape from the voters roll. Totally unsympathetic to the cause of the protest, she expressed shock and outrage at the make-up of the crowd that filled Cape Town's streets from the Parade to St George's Street, which she referred to as a "*histeriese massa*" [hysterical mass]. What particularly upset her was that she saw little sense of discernible racial identities being displayed by the protesters. "*Dit was 'n properse mix up!*" [It was a real mix-up] she declared. "*Blank, gekleurd en swart het Tipperary gesing en smeulende stink fakkels gedra*" [White, coloured and black sang Tipperary together and carried smouldering stinking torches].⁹²

A few months later, members of Cape Town City Council were expressing similar fears, although their major concern was that the gaiety and frivolity associated with street

⁹⁰See T D Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion*, Berkeley (1975).

⁹¹A Neethling-Pohl to M Pienaar and S Hunter, 5 May 1952.

⁹²A Neethling-Pohl to Gladstone and Rosa, 29 May 1951, US, WEG Louw collection, 158, k.u.24 (142).

processions might excite itself into a semblance of disorder which they did not want for a 'serious' 'historic' occasion. This was expressed in the concern that the pageant may turn into a "hospital rag", referring to the annual float parade by students from the University of Cape Town to raise money for medical institutions in the Cape peninsula.⁹³ While recognising these problems, the pageant committee was impressed with Neethling-Pohl's suggestion for a moving pageant. Staging the past on the streets in the form of a procession would enable more people to view the past and it would also overcome the complication of how to deal with details of language usage that might occur if items were staged in a theatrical arena. It was also maintained that street processions did not necessarily have to take on the appearance of a 'hospital rag' and that similar events in Cape Town, Coventry in England and Otago in New Zealand had been "solemn and impressive". Problems of racial delineation, which were essential if white nationhood was to be the central focus of the festival, could be effectively dealt with by arranging separate pageants. But most of all, the pageant committee was confident that in Neethling-Pohl they had found a person who could assert the necessary control over the past, ensuring that it was presented in an attractive manner and at the same time preserving the 'historic' nature of the occasion. "Miss Anna Neethling-Pohl ... besides being a student of history, has carved for herself a niche in the theatrical world not only as an actress but also as a producer ... who has recently attended similar pageants in Europe."⁹⁴ With all this experience the pageant committee was confident that there would not be a "properse mix-up".

Charged with controlling the presentation of the past for the [white] nation, Neethling-Pohl set about drawing up draft scripts for a pageant of the past which would take place a few days before Van Riebeeck was due to land at Granger Bay. Some six months prior to Neethling-Pohl's appointment there had already been some discussion around the historical presentations for the festival in a sub-committee, chaired by C F Albertyn. The framework which had been decided upon was to present about twenty events starting with pre-discovery - "*wat die eerste*

⁹³Reply to criticisms of the Pageant made at the meeting of the Cape Town Committee for the Van Riebeeck Festival (1952) held on Friday, 24 August, 1951, by a City Council Deputation, US, 158.ku.1.Va (12). On the stated function of the hospital rag see message from T B Davie, Principal and Vic-Chancellor of UCT, *Sax Appeal: University of Cape Town Rag Mag*, March 1952, p.13.

⁹⁴Reply to criticisms of the Pageant, 24 August 1951.

blankes hier aangetref her" [what the first whites encountered here] - to be followed by selected highlights which would be chosen by professors at History departments in South Africa.⁹⁵ Most of the events that were selected in fact arose out of discussions between J C Pauw, the organising secretary for the festival, and H B Thom soon after the sub-committee had met in November 1950.⁹⁶ In Afrikaner nationalist historical circles Thom was regarded as an expert in his field. He had gained a reputation among his students for his knowledge of the birth of "*Blank Suid Afrika*" [White South Africa], his obsession with establishing factual veracity, "*noukeurig, presies, sistematies, objektief...*," [precise, systematic, objective], and his ability to link together in a "symbiotic relationship ... the demands of academe and the demands of the '*volk*'".⁹⁷ Given these 'qualifications', he was in many senses the ideal historian to give the past of the Van Riebeeck festival its authority. Neethling-Pohl used the material that Pauw had received from Thom for the scripts which she drew up. Intensely aware that the form of the past for which she had strongly motivated necessitated perhaps more than a brief notion of the real historic to give it validity, she submitted drafts for the moving pageant to Thom for approval. Although there is no indication of what his comments were, they were taken extremely seriously and immediately implemented in the revised text.⁹⁸ Thom thus bestowed the blessing of his 'empirically based' 'white' history on this play of the past.

Thom's role in authenticating the presentation of the past went much further than making recommendations for the pageant. At the time when Neethling-Pohl was involved in making arrangements for the procession, he had been granted special paid leave by the University of

⁹⁵Minutes of Meeting of historical presentations sub-committee, 16 November 1950, UCT (ASL), McM: Van Riebeeck Festival.

⁹⁶J C Pauw to Head, Dept of History, University of Stellenbosch, 18 November 1950, US, Thom, Box 49.

⁹⁷D J Kotze, *Professor H.B.Thom*, University of Stellenbosch (1969), p.17; Grundlingh, 'Politics, Principles and Problems', p.2. See also the debate on the Public Holidays Bill in the House of Assembly, 18 February 1952, where the Minister of the Interior refers to Thom as "pre-eminently an expert on Van Riebeeck's period", (Hansard, 18 February 1952, p.1362).

⁹⁸A Neethling-Pohl to H Thom, 7 January 1952; A Neethling-Pohl to H Thom, 21 January 1952, US, Thom, Box 49.

Stellenbosch to edit Van Riebeeck's diary for the Van Riebeeck Society.⁹⁹ Although this aspect of his work was less highly visible than the pageantry with which Anna Neethling-Pohl was involved, and there was no special committee set up by the festival organisers to deal with the publication of the diary, it was the diary that gave the festival as a whole the effective means to realise its historical authority. Thom himself recognised the importance of the diary in giving authenticity to Van Riebeeck's past and, although his wish that the diary be given what he called its "correct title", *Die Kaapse Dagverhaal tydens Van Riebeeck* [The Daily Record at the Cape During the Time of Van Riebeeck], to indicate that Van Riebeeck was not really the author, was rejected, he devoted his time to editing the diary methodically using photocopies obtained from the Hague.¹⁰⁰ The importance of the task of producing the diary in time to coincide with the festival was recognised by the government, which gave Stellenbosch University a grant of £3 976 to enable it to find a temporary replacement for Thom while he was editing the diary.¹⁰¹ The Van Riebeeck Society, recognising that the diary did not form part of its usual publication programme, convened a special editorial committee. With its assistance, by March 1952, Thom, together with D B Bosman, who worked on the Dutch edition, had completed the task of editing volume one of the diary at a cost of some £10 000.¹⁰² 4 500 copies of the diary were printed, 3 000 in English and 1 500 in Dutch, in time for the pageantry in Cape Town's streets and for Van Riebeeck's landing at Granger Bay.¹⁰³

Initial sales in March 1952 seemed to indicate that the diary was very popular. Within two weeks of its publication it was reported to the Van Riebeeck Society that half of the print run had been sold.¹⁰⁴ However, these figures seem to have been highly exaggerated, as by

⁹⁹Minutes, Council Meeting Van Riebeeck Society, 20 March 1948, SAL, VRS, MSB 633, 1 (4).

¹⁰⁰Minutes, Council meeting Van Riebeeck Society, 8 Dec 1945, SAL, VRS, MSB 633, 1 (1).

¹⁰¹The Van Riebeeck Society Progress Report on the Tercentenary Edition, 1952, SAL, VRS, MSB 633 1 (5).

¹⁰²This included publication, transcription and translation publication costs. The Van Riebeeck Society Progress Report on the Tercentenary Edition, September 1952, SAL, VRS, MSB 633 1 (5).

¹⁰³Minutes, Dagregister Editorial Committee, 24 January 1952, SAL, VRS, MSB 633, 1 (4).

¹⁰⁴Minutes, Council Meeting, VRS, 29 March 1952, SAL, VRS, MSB 633, 1 (4).

September 1952, 2 203 copies had been sold, just over a half of which had been purchased by Van Riebeeck Society members.¹⁰⁵ In order to recover costs, there was an urgent need to increase sales but attempts to market the diary proved to be fruitless. Even some twelve years after the Van Riebeeck festival, although the Dutch version had been sold out, 1 757 copies of the English edition remained unsold.¹⁰⁶ This would seem to indicate that the diary in itself held little popular appeal, although the *Argus* did publish it in the form of a daily cartoon strip and *Die Burger* carried brief excerpts from the diary on a daily basis. But, in spite of its unpopularity in the form that it was produced by the Van Riebeeck Society, the diary was crucial to validating the past of the festival. As had been the case at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the editing and publication of the diaries of voortrekkers by Afrikaner nationalist historians had helped transform the concept of the movement of farmers into the interior of the country into the 'reality' of a 'Great Trek' that became "beyond dispute",¹⁰⁷ so the publication of Van Riebeeck's diary made 'his past' into empirically verifiable 'fact'. It also gave the notion of three hundred years of settlement a beginning and an associated scientific historicity which would encompass all that was made and selected to follow in the play of the past into the 'factual' real.

In a sense Thom's role in authenticating the past for the Van Riebeeck festival through selecting the key events for the pageant of the past, refining the script and editing the company record was an expected one. He had after all played a major role in contributing to public historical debates about the diary in the pages of *Die Huisgenoot*, was the prime mover behind the call to create a Van Riebeeck day public holiday and was appeared on various committees associated with planning the festival from the mid-1940s. Probably even more significant in giving the past of the festival its authority, though, was the way that it became associated with a category labelled 'history' rather than politics, the former being identified

¹⁰⁵Minutes, Council Meeting, VRS, 12 September 1952, SAL, VRS, MSB 633, 1 (4).

¹⁰⁶With the agreement of the publisher, A A Balkema, it was decided that the best way for the government to recover some of the money it had spent was for the Education Department to take over 1 500 copies and distribute them for free in schools, while the publisher would sell the remaining 248 copies at R2.50 to buyers from overseas who had specialised interests. J Du P Scholtz, Chair VRS to Secretary of Education, 1964(?), SAL, VRS, MSB 633, 3 (1).

¹⁰⁷L van der Watt, 'Art, Gender Ideology and Afrikaner Nationalism: A History of the Voortrekker Monument Tapestries', unpublished MA thesis, University of Cape Town (1996), p.12.

with 'objectivity' and 'neutrality', the latter assuming notions of 'being tainted' with partisan affiliations.

One of the clearest indications of the festival being distinguished as an 'historical' moment was when the Council of the University of the Witwatersrand decided to commemorate the tercentenary by conferring eight honorary degrees on South Africans "who had distinguished themselves in connection with either the cultural and economic development of the Union, or the elucidation of its past, or the interpretation of its present problems to the world". There were two features of the list of people selected by the Wits University Council to receive these degrees. Firstly, in a delicate balancing act, and in keeping with festival's notion of a 'white nation' drawing the English and Afrikaans 'races' together, both Afrikaans and English-speaking figures were awarded degrees. Sarah Getrude Millin, the writer who was proclaimed by the Wits Council as "uncontestably the most prominent South African writer of our generation in the English-speaking world" - many years later J M Coetzee described her as "a woman imbued with the racial prejudices of white South African society " who used "her novels as a means of propagating and justifying these principles"¹⁰⁸ - was awarded a degree alongside the Afrikaans literary figures J D du Toit (Totius) and D F Malherbe.¹⁰⁹ The Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Vaderland*, praised the University for the latter two awards as they maintained it showed that the Afrikaans language belonged to all South Africans and was also the "*erfenis van die Engelsprekende Suid-Afrikaner*" [heritage of the English speaking South African].¹¹⁰ Secondly, recognition was given to individuals who were involved in the production of history. The historian Eric Walker, whose work was cited as defining "the main outlines of the story of South Africa", Helen McKay, the unofficial curator of the Africana collection at the University's library, and C Graham Botha, South Africa's chief archivist

¹⁰⁸J M Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa*, Johannesburg (1988), p.162. Coetzee points out that Millin's writings were very much in tune with many of the racial theories which were dominant at the time.

¹⁰⁹Proposals for Honours Degrees to be conferred at the summer Graduation Ceremony, March 1952, University of the Witwatersrand archives (hereafter Wits (A)) Misc.Hons DS/375/51; Minutes of a Meeting of the Honorary Degrees Committee held at the Principal's residence, 31 August 1951, Wits (A), Hons. D.S./310/51; Minutes of Council of University of the Witwatersrand, 30 November 1951, Wits (A)

¹¹⁰*Die Vaderland*, 19 March 1952.

between 1919 and 1944, were all awarded honorary degrees.¹¹¹ It is difficult to establish direct connections between the work of these producers of history and the history being produced for Van Riebeeck in 1952, the closest one can come to doing this is to point to the illustrations from Botha's *Our South Africa* (1938) which were used, with acknowledgement, for *Our Three Centuries* which was compiled by Victor de Kock for the festival committee in 1952.¹¹² Nonetheless, the recovery, systematising and writing of the past by these producers of history that Wits University honoured was being recognised as constituting part of a corpus of South African history that the festival could and did draw on. The honorary degrees bestowed on these historians gave the festival the aura of being about history as a scholarly pursuit and not a political and/or playful drama that the pageantry might conjure up. This was particularly important for the festival organisers in order to counter the prediction by a history lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand, Arthur Keppel-Jones, that the pageantry associated with the festival would be used by Afrikaner nationalists to further their political aspirations.

The organising committee for Van Riebeeck seized upon the opportunity to promote the festival as history of the 'white nation' by arranging for the graduation ceremony to be broadcast nationally on radio by the South African Broadcasting Corporation.¹¹³ Yet, for all the publicity given to the honorary graduands and their 'achievements', the occasion did not entirely conform to the expectations of the festival organisers. In his speech at the graduation ceremony, the Chancellor of the University, Richard Feetham, used the concept of race to designate categories of 'white', 'non-European' and 'African' instead of, as it was to be used in the festival, as 'English' and 'Afrikaans'. Arguing that the Van Riebeeck festival was an opportunity to "review the past and assess the future" along these much broader racial lines, he called upon 'whites' to use the knowledge derived from history and science about "the unity of the human race" to rid themselves of "the idea of innate racial superiority".¹¹⁴ More

¹¹¹Proposals for Honours Degrees to be conferred at the summer Graduation Ceremony, March 1952, Wits (A), Misc.Hons.Ds/375/51.

¹¹²C Graham Botha, *Our South Africa: Past and Present*, Cape Town (1938); V De Kock, *Our Three Centuries*.

¹¹³*Zionist Record*, 28 March 1952.

¹¹⁴*Natal Daily News*, 24 March 1952; *Sunday Times*, 25 March 1952.

effort, he maintained, should be placed on developing an African intelligentsia which would serve its own people and the country as a whole so as to ensure that the South African nation would be built "*saam met hulle*" [together with them].¹¹⁵ This was certainly not the story of separate pasts and the growth of a 'white nation' that the Van Riebeeck festival committee sought to portray and wanted to hear. Nevertheless, the activities surrounding the awarding of the honorary degrees to the 'English', the 'Afrikaners' and the producers of history still enabled the graduation ceremony to give a semblance of authenticity to Van Riebeeck's past, but perhaps not quite as much as he would have expected.

Richard Feetham's slight subversion of the past of the festival was an indication that its reality effect was both not easy to control and constitute by merely relying on the words of the professor from Stellenbosch, the 'primary sources' and the notion that what was being dealt with was 'history'. There were marked divisions over the make up of a South African nation and its history. Once the draft scripts for the pageant of the past began to circulate in the public domain, sometimes inadvertently, these divisions began to manifest themselves. In building a nation on its own terms, the festival organisers often had to negotiate and accommodate these different histories into its History in order to legitimise its activities as broadly 'historical', rather than 'political'.

Responsibility for the initial script for the historical procession lay with Anna Neethling-Pohl and members of the pageant committee, who were defined by the festival organisers as people "well-versed in history". While they were averse to committing acts of "violence" against "the facts of history", this committee, which contained English and Afrikaans speakers in equal proportion, worked within a paradigm of presenting a past to and for Van Riebeeck which would entail "give and take" to make it into a broadly acceptable settler history. The result was that the first script that they approved for the historical procession in the streets of Cape Town (there had been six previous drafts, based on discussions with Thom, for a stage show) was a result of sometimes lengthy negotiations over the past in order to arrive at unanimity. This consensual past which was eventually scripted commenced in 'Africa: Dark and Unknown' and ended with a float entitled 'Africa Liberated'. The intervening 70-odd floats

¹¹⁵*Die Transvaler*, 24 March 1952.

would emphasise European settlement, focusing on specific events that were determined as signifying aspects of 'English' and 'Afrikaner' pasts, including some of the tension between these two, and ending with a coming together in a white settler nation with an indigenous history constituted as South African. Among the people and events depicted leading to settlement were to be the Portuguese seafarers Vasco da Gama and Bartolomew Diaz, reaching the Cape and planting crosses, Sir Francis Drake, the English pirate, reporting to Queen Elizabeth that he had just rounded the "fairest Cape" and the "Flight of the Huguenots" from religious persecution in France in 1685 (eventually) to take up residence at the Cape. All this flurry of pre (and post?) settlement activity lead to the scenes of the "*Nederlanders Se Volksplanting*" [Dutch Volks Planting] in 1652 with floats depicting the three ships in Van Riebeeck's fleet, the *Dromedaris*, *Reiger* and *Goede Hoop*. After the moment of settlement, the 'Afrikaans' and 'English' 'races' were to be forged separately in the pageant. Events which emphasised the past as a struggle for freedom, 'The First Free Burghers', the 'The Revolt against William Adriaan van der Stel' and 'The Great Trek', were presented as crucial in the making of the history of the Afrikaners. In the 'English' history, in contrast, it was the 'contributions' of individual personalities, 'Lady Anne Barnard receives guests at a ball', 'Lord Charles Somerset Goes a Hunting' and 'Pringle and Fairbairn Fight for the freedom of the press', which were selected as significant moments for the pageant. Some of the conflicts between these two pasts were to be displayed: members of the London Missionary Society were presented in 1811 as falsely accusing the settlers of mistreating the local Khoisan inhabitants; in 1902, after scenes depicting the "*Tweede Vryheidsoorlog*" [Second War of Liberation] between the British and Boer forces, a group of 60 women and children, dressed in black mourning apparel, would march to signify the way that the British had treated Boer women in concentration camps during the war. These conflicts would be remembered, but at the same time would make way for a process of unity of settlement and nationhood in a special 'South African float' which would provide the finale. As 'South Africa' would make its spectacular entrance into the specially constructed 50 000 seater stadium at the foreshore, it would be encircled by all the others floats of events and personalities of the past, bringing them together in an Africa that had just been seen to be liberated by a history presented as 'white civilisation'.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ 'Opsomming Van Die Historiese Volksoptog Soos Goedgekeur Deur Die Optogkomitee', attached to letter from J C Pauw to H B Thom, 11 July 1951, US, Thom, Box 49.

Armed with this script, Anna Neethling-Pohl approached various commercial concerns based in Johannesburg, including the massive Anglo-American Corporation, to sponsor individual floats. Much to her alarm they almost immediately raised objections about the omission of certain events from the pageant, such as the Act of Union in 1910, and the way that many of the depictions were offensive to whites who claimed to have an English ancestry.¹¹⁷ What this precisely alluded to became evident when the script was passed on to the press - by whom is not entirely clear - and one of Johannesburg's English language newspapers, the *Rand Daily Mail*, ran excerpts from the programme with an accompanying editorial which maintained that the overwhelming impression being created in the pageant was one of an Afrikaner people struggling against their antagonists in the form of British domination. The two floats which were singled out were the ones dealing with the Boer War and the Philanthropists. The latter, the editorial asserted, was a gross distortion of the missionaries' efforts to bring "some kindly Christianity into the brutal frontier life" while the former with its "legions of mourning women" was a "dainty dish for the racialists". To place the "race which produced Drake, Raleigh and Cook" into a South African past which was based on "partnership" rather than "bitterness", the *Mail* suggested that there should be floats of the British defeating the Zulu, protecting Table Bay, mining gold and fighting against communist forces in Korea.¹¹⁸ This was clearly not the sort of reaction that Neethling-Pohl was hoping would emanate from her visit. Arthur Wilson, the head of the Anglo-American Corporation's public relations division, expressed the sentiment that she had shown political naïvety in distributing the document in Johannesburg, rushing in like a fool "where angels fear to tread".¹¹⁹

Indeed, Neethling-Pohl's actions appeared to have had almost dire consequences for the organisation of the festival as Transvaal industrialists threatened to withdraw en masse. Jacques Pauw, the organising secretary for the festival, who had acquired a masters degree in History at Stellenbosch University in 1929 - first studying under S F N Gie and then his

¹¹⁷Report for the Festival fair committee on the political aspect in the Transvaal', 1951, CA, A1646, vol 339. In the 1950s Anglo-American was setting itself up to assume control of most of the mining operations in southern Africa. In 1952 it produced 25% of South Africa's gold and 24% of its uranium, 43% of southern Africa's coal, 51% of Northern Rhodesia's copper and sold 41% of the world's diamonds, D Innes, *Anglo American and the Rise of Modern South Africa*, Johannesburg (1984), p.157.

¹¹⁸*Rand Daily Mail*, 10 July 1951.

¹¹⁹Report for the Festival fair committee on the political aspect in the Transvaal'.

successor, J A Wiid - and who had subsequently become a school teacher before taking up a post as the Public Relations Officer of the Bloemfontein City Council, arrived in Johannesburg shortly after Neethling-Pohl's departure in order to encourage participation in the envisaged festival fair and met with a stony response. Almost wherever he went the festival was being referred to as "a second Voortrekker monument", a reference to some of the events that had taken place at the inauguration in 1949, and a political manoeuvre for the Nationalists to win the 1953 election.¹²⁰ This scenario for the Van Riebeeck festival, which had echoes of Keppel-Jones' book, was what the organisers had been desperately seeking to avoid through their insistence upon the 'historic' nature of the proceedings. It would seem that once the past that the festival sought to portray was seen by 'Transvaal industry' and the *Rand Daily Mail* to be hostile towards whites who claimed an English heritage, it had crossed the border from history into politics. The Johannesburg Nationalist Party newspaper, *Die Transvaler*, on the other hand, hoped that the festival committee would not heed these criticisms as it maintained that to do so would be "a violation of the truth". The true history of South Africa, as *Die Transvaler* asserted it, was that "respectable Afrikaners" had been falsely accused by missionaries, that many of the self-same Afrikaners had moved northwards because of British "misrule", and that the "imperialists and capitalists" had used the imprisonment of children and women in concentration camps to break Boer resistance. If this history was not to be part of Van Riebeeck's past, then, threatened *Die Transvaler*, Afrikaners would stay away from the festival.¹²¹

But Pauw was confident that the Nationalist Party, with the weight of its party organisation, its affiliation with a myriad of cultural organisations and its newly-acquired state power would be able to sustain white Afrikaans-speaking support for the festival. His major concern was with the grave implications that a pull-out from the largest representatives of capitalist interests in the country - the Anglo-American Corporation and the Chamber of Mines - held for the Van Riebeeck festival. Not only could it mean that the fair which he was directly involved in planning might flop as other industrial concerns followed their example and withdrew, but that Van Riebeeck's claims to be asserting white "racial unity" in 1952 could

¹²⁰Report for the Festival fair committee on the political aspect in the Transvaal.'

¹²¹Report from *Die Transvaler*, quoted in *The Star*, 13 July 1951.

be undermined. This closely echoed the sentiments of the editor of the *Benoni City Times* who argued that instead of "putting white against white" by consistently dredging up "the tragedies of the Anglo-Boer War", the festival should promote a "united race". This was largely a response to increasing African urbanisation on the East Rand which had taken place in the 1930s and '40s as large numbers of secondary industries established their operations there. Conditions in many of the African townships in the area were particularly bad and in the late 1940s and early '50s more radical African political activity had emerged with the Communist Party mobilising popular support around local grievances. The editor of the *Benoni City Times* articulated this as a 'black peril' and he advocated that it was necessary to counter it with a racially exclusive white unity. The historical representations which were being proposed for 1952 would, according to him, merely serve to divide the white race and lead to a time in the near future when the country would be "overwhelmed by the Bantu". To counter this perceived threat he suggested, that the Van Riebeeck of the 1650s and the president of the Transvaal Republic during the Boer War in the 1890s, Paul Kruger, be brought together in a display of white "*EENDRAG*" [UNITY] in 1952.¹²²

Pauw sought to cement this racially exclusive unity after cracks had begun to emerge when the pageant programme had been inadvertently released to the press at the beginning of July 1951. He recommended that a massive publicity campaign be launched, which would draw in both the Nationalist and United Parties and thereby pronounce the festival as "non-political". Furthermore, he suggested to the festival fair committee that an investigation be instituted into how the script had been leaked and that public procedures be implemented to discipline whoever was responsible for releasing what was now conceptualised as an unauthorised past. Finally, he advised the committee to move quickly and publish a revised history without the "objectionable floats".¹²³

Pauw moved swiftly to ensure that his proposals for damage control were implemented. Although there appears not to have been an internal inquiry into the release of the pageant

¹²²Report for the Festival fair committee on the political aspect in the Transvaal'; *Benoni City Times*, 13 July 1951; T Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, Johannesburg (1983), pp.131-4.

¹²³Report for the Festival fair committee on the political aspect in the Transvaal'.

script, he issued a statement saying that Van Riebeeck's past for 1952 had not yet been finally approved and that suggestions on historical items were still most welcome.¹²⁴ The chairs of both the central and Cape Town committees issued statements that the festival would be 'non-political' and on 18 July 1951 released a final script that had been sanctioned by their respective committees and hastily approved by Thom.¹²⁵ In this revised past a much more delicate balancing act was employed to produce a history that would find broader acceptability in what was envisaged as a white nation, especially from those interests who had financial muscle. The missionaries were no longer presented as false accusers but as 'clashing' with "European settlers" over 'treatment' of "the Hottentots". Instead of being enemies, the British and Boer generals were now to ride side by side as "great" leaders, "courageous" and "famous" strategists. After the Anglo-Boer War, the presentation would no longer be "*Die Republikeinse vlae halfmas begelei deur 'n erewag van vroue*" [The flags of the Republics at half-mast accompanied by women forming a guard of honour] but would simply be entitled "*Die Einde van Die Oorlog*" [The End of the War]. The women would no longer wear mourning apparel but would be dressed in white and escort a float which symbolised the demise of the Boer republics. Six drummers would herald the final chapter of the pageant entitled "THE ROADS CONVERGE" with floats depicting the Act of Union in 1910 (representatives of the colonies meeting "on equal footing"), the recognition of Afrikaans and South African involvement in both world wars, with no mention of the intense and bloody conflicts which had taken place over the decision to participate. The final float would be a horse-drawn chariot, ridden by a young boy and girl bearing the South African flag and adorned with emblems of the provinces.¹²⁶

This revised past was greeted with much more enthusiasm from the English language dailies and the major industrial and commercial concerns in the country. In general they agreed that the committee, in presenting its programme for the past, had been able to stabilise history,

¹²⁴*The Star*, 11 July 1951; *Cape Times*, 11 July 1951.

¹²⁵*Cape Times*, 18 and 19 July 1951; *The Star*, 19 July 1951; *Die Transvaler*, 18 July 1951; *Rand Daily Mail*, 18 July 1951; Thom to Pauw, 16 July 1951, US, Thom, Box 49.

¹²⁶*Official Festival Programme*, pp.109, 119-123; *Cape Times*, 19 July 1951; Script for '*Historiese Optog - Streng Vertroulik*' ['Historical Procession - Strictly Confidential'] containing alterations made in pen to typescript, UCT (ASL), McM: Van Riebeeck Festival.

seen as a body of factual knowledge, with politics, seen as the arena of conflict between whites claiming different beliefs, thereby enabling the former to dissociate itself from the latter. Van Riebeeck's past, which now bore the official stamp of approval from the festival committee, was congratulated for eliminating events from the past which "could offend", producing a "picturesque", "dignified (if not comprehensive) survey of white South Africa's progress since 1952" and being "a faithful reflection of the cavalcade of South African history".¹²⁷ The Cape Town Chamber of Commerce proclaimed the new past with its excisions and amendments to be "well conceived", while the Transvaal Chamber of Mines was now ready to embrace the festival with unbridled enthusiasm, promising to build the biggest mining exhibit ever seen in South Africa at the festival fair on a plot adjacent to a reconstruction of Van Riebeeck's birthplace, Culemborg.¹²⁸ The only hesitation concerned how the scripted pageant would actually be translated into visual representations on the day of the pageant. Although the editor of the *Rand Daily Mail* was still wary, both the editors of *The Star* and the *Cape Times* were confident that, given the pronouncements from the festival committee and the way that conflicts over the historical episodes had been handled, this was an "exaggerated suspicion".¹²⁹

Within Afrikaner nationalist circles, there was a less enthusiastic response to the depictions of the past that would now parade down Cape Town's main thoroughfare, Adderley Street. Mostly, although not entirely, their reactions were representative of the provincial divisions and different ambits of Afrikaner nationalist power. In the Cape, the Afrikaner nationalist movement had grown in the 1910s and '20s in large measure upon a well-established base of agricultural capital. From the security of this position which had developed gradually over the past few decades, and a close affiliation with Van Riebeeck stretching back to the 1920s, *Die Burger* - which had started in 1915 with funding from Stellenbosch wine farmers - came out strongly in support of the revised festival programme. The editor maintained that the script for the pageant had not distorted, sentimentalised or erased episodes from the past for the sake

¹²⁷*The Star*, 19 July 1951; *Rand Daily Mail*, 20 July 1951; See also *Cape Times*, 19 July 1951.

¹²⁸*Cape Times*, 19 July 1951; *Die Burger*, 24 August 1951; *The Star*, 12 September 1951; *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 September 1951. For an account of the festival fair and the Chamber of Mines' exhibit, see chapter 4.

¹²⁹*Rand Daily Mail*, 20 July 1951; *The Star*, 19 July 1951; *Cape Times*, 19 July 1951.

of the festivities. Nonetheless, he added, in its work the committee had not highlighted the scenes of conflict and thus managed to present an impressive past "*sonder vrees en sonder vooroordeel*" [without fear or prejudice].¹³⁰ In the northern provinces of the country, Afrikaner nationalists were far less pleased with the revised script. Economically and politically less secure, much of their recent success had been based upon the mobilisation of an exclusive Afrikaner identity by a grouping of teachers, church ministers and civil servants, which coalesced around the Afrikaner Broederbond and its affiliated cultural organisations, the ATKV and the FAK, as witnessed in the trek commemorations of 1938 and 1949. Already there had been some unease in the early planning stages from within these groupings that the Van Riebeeck festival would at least neglect and at most undermine this sentiment which had relied very heavily on mobilising an Afrikaner nationalist past. When the script of the past was published in July 1951, this cautionary approach manifested itself again, although the level of critique within different Afrikaner nationalist circles in the north varied. *Die Vaderland*, a newspaper that was associated with an older, and less virulent form of Afrikaner nationalism that identified itself with the ex-Prime Minister Hertzog, for instance, lauded the festival committee for being able to produce what it called an 'objective' past out of the profusion of conflicts between settlers. It did feel, nonetheless, that a large part in the pageant was being given to the "*Klein Engelanders in ons midde*" [Small Englishmen in our midst], out of proportion to their role in South African history. It also wanted the Second World War to be taken out of the script as it was too contemporary and came close to the issues of current political conflicts, and indeed had led to a rift in the government over participation.¹³¹ *Die Transvaler*, which was linked more closely to the Afrikaner Broederbond and was deeply distrustful of the Cape branch of the party and its mouthpiece, *Die Burger*, was much more disparaging of the history being proposed for the pageant. Speaking on behalf of the "great majority of Afrikaners", it pointed to defects in the programme which did not accord with "the Afrikaner who knew his national past and felt with it". This national past, according to *Die Transvaler*, was being undermined in various ways: the role of women in Afrikaner history had been neglected and instead prominence had been accorded to the wife of a British official

¹³⁰*Die Burger*, 19 July 1951; For the different structural bases of Afrikaner nationalism in the Cape and the Transvaal see D O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, Johannesburg (1983), ch.7. See chapter one of this thesis for early associations with the commemoration of Van Riebeeck and the landing.

¹³¹*Die Vaderland*, 20 July 1951.

at the Cape, "the frivolous Lady Anne Barnard"; the constitutional development of the Union of South Africa was distorted with all the accolades being heaped on the previous constitutions of the Cape and Natal and no recognition given to the achievements of the Boer republics in this regard; the Second World War had been incorrectly represented by overlooking the opposition to the war from many Afrikaners; and, in what it called the most serious omission, the women and children who died in concentration camps during the South African war were to have no "place in such an historical pageant". These excisions and distortions of what had previously been constituted as key and essential ingredients of an Afrikaner past led the editor of *Die Transvaler* to the conclusion that the Van Riebeeck festival was becoming "Not a True Reflection" of South African history and could lead to massive protests from Afrikaners. A letter to the newspaper the following week echoed these sentiments and reminded readers how a watered-down version of Afrikaner "tradition" had threatened to dominate the proceedings at the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument in 1949.¹³²

These objections were taken a step further at the beginning of August when members of an ATKV delegation presented a list of observations on the pageant to Mr Reeler of the Central committee of the festival. Their remarks closely resembled the objections that had been raised in *Die Transvaler* but went further to outline general principles which it felt had not been properly considered. These included the questions of how it had been decided to incorporate some historical events while excluding others (was spectacle or historical value the criterion?), how organisations were allocated to their respective presentations (with 'English' organisations having more prominence than their Afrikaans cultural counterparts) and how the actual historical content of the floats was being decided upon (with little clarity on the procedure whereby certain events, like the Great Trek, - *op sigself genoeg vir 'n hele program* [on itself enough for an entire programme] - were to be reduced to singular episodes in South African history). When it came to specific examples, the members of the ATKV delegation pointed to the inclusion of what they saw as unimportant and meaningless events in the pageant - like a hunting party of the British Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, a dance hosted by Lady Anne Barnard, and the Dutch governor, Simon Van der Stel, riding in his coach - at the expense

¹³²*The Forum*, 27 July 1951 (quoting excerpts from *Die Transvaler*); *Die Transvaler*, 20 and 25 July 1951; For the early struggles between *Die Transvaler* and *Die Burger* see O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, pp.105-6.

of what they saw as "*deurslaggewende en verreikende*" [influential and far reaching] historical processes, such as the role played by Afrikaner women in South African history. The delegation called on the festival committee to give some clarity on these and other issues and to publicise more broadly who was taking part in the proceedings.¹³³

Although there is no report on the outcome of the above meeting, the protest actions which *Die Transvaler* had predicted did not materialise. One change which was made in the pageant was that the Republic of the Orange Free State was labelled a "'Model' State" so as to counter the Cape colony as the bearer of constitutional development.¹³⁴ This did not mean that the ATKV was satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations and it and the FAK, much to the ire of Anna-Neethling-Pohl, increasingly withdrew from participation in the Cape Town events in order to organise local Van Riebeeck festivals in the Transvaal where they could have much greater say over the content. The ATKV invested much more of its time and energy in organising the mail coach processions throughout the country.¹³⁵ In addition to hiving off onto their own terrains, the Afrikaner nationalist organisations in the north went out of their way to devise schemes which would highlight the role of Afrikaner women in the portrayals of South African history. The *Vrou en Moeder Beweging* (Wife and Mother Movement), which was the women's equivalent of the ATKV, offered to towns and cities in the Pretoria-Witwatersrand region its expertise to assist in arranging historical depictions of Afrikaner women.¹³⁶ Floats such as "South African Womanhood" and "*Vrou en Moeder*" [Wife and mother] began to make their appearance in local Van Riebeeck festivals.¹³⁷ For the national commemoration in Cape Town, the pageant sub-committee provisionally approved the design of a float originally entitled "Womanhood" for the "Pageant of the Present", - which was to take place directly after the "Historical Pageant" - but suggested that its appellation be altered

¹³³Bedenkinge in verband met die historiese volksotog: Van Riebeeck-fees (1952)', 4 August 1951, INCH, ATKV collection, PV 379, A11/13.

¹³⁴*Official Festival Programme*, pp.112-115.

¹³⁵Anna Neethling-Pohl to The Chairs, Pageant Sub-Committee, 5 May 1952, CA, A1657, vol 322. See chapter five for an account of local Van Riebeeck festivals and the journeys of the mail coaches.

¹³⁶*Die Transvaler*, 20 July 1951; *The Star*, 20 July 1951.

¹³⁷See, for example, *Souvenir Programme Johannesburg Van Riebeeck Festival and Mail Coach Celebrations*, Johannesburg (1952); *African Mirror*, 28 January 1952, NFA, AM 657, FA 2442.

to "Woman and Motherhood" to reflect "all aspects of the activities of women".¹³⁸ These 'aspects', as they appeared "enthroned" on the float, asserted a seemingly natural progression in the lives of all women, moving in four phases from infancy through to youth, marriage and ultimately, the "perfection" of motherhood. This was clearly in accord with the *Vrou en Moeder Beweging*, whose president had claimed, in 1948, that, despite the fact that women had moved into occupations previously occupied by men during the Second World War, their primary "purpose in life was to marry and rear children".¹³⁹

Other than in the float processions, this image of 'woman' as wife and mother was promoted by popularising the icon of Maria van Riebeeck as the 'housewife' who devoted her life to Jan and these other 'womanly' tasks. The government's Department of Agriculture, which, since 1949, had published the "first Official Journal for the Housewife", *The Woman and her Home*, produced a special edition for the Van Riebeeck festival with a front cover showing "The Wife of Kommandeur Jan van Riebeeck". Among its contents for discussion were "The Cape in 1655-1656", "The Costumes in the Time of Jan van Riebeeck", how to "plan housework" - included in this were caring for children, preparing meals, cleaning, gardening, shopping, care of domestic animals, relaxation and entertaining guests - and "Typical Dutch Recipes".¹⁴⁰ The image of Maria was also 'brought into the household' through the issuing of one penny stamps depicting the portrait of her by Dick Craey, forming part of a commemorative set for the tercentenary.¹⁴¹ In order to monumentalise the "kindly, devoted and tolerant", "*Mevrouw Van Riebeeck*" [Mrs Van Riebeeck], the Cape Town City Council decided to name a street after her and the Dutch royal family signalled its intention, on behalf of the people of Holland, to present Jan and the city with a statue of "*sy gade*" [his spouse]

¹³⁸Minutes, meeting pageant sub-committee, 13 December 1951, UCT (ASL), McM: Van Riebeeck Festival; See also *Souvenir Programme Johannesburg Van Riebeeck Festival*.

¹³⁹*Official Festival Programme*, p.132; 'Die Optog van die Hede', SABC, 19/60-61 (52), 3 April 1952; *Daily Dispatch*, 9 September 1948.

¹⁴⁰*The Woman and Her Home*, 4, 39 (1952), pp.5, 50, 51, 53 and 74.

¹⁴¹The other stamps in the set were a portrait of Jan van Riebeeck, the official seal of the VOC, Van Riebeeck's ships arriving in Table Bay and the painting of the landing by Bell, Supplement to *The South African Philatelist*, December 1951. Thanks to Andrew Bank for showing me the Exhibition Commemorative Cover which the post office issued with these stamps and a Van Riebeeck festival postmark dated 6.4.52.

Maria.¹⁴² This Maria was given a history of her own, through the publication, in Holland - under the auspices of *Zuid-Afrikaansche Stichting Moederland* [South African Foundation Motherland] - of the biography of the "*Huisvrouw van Jan Van Riebeeck*" [Housewife of Jan van Riebeeck] who accompanied him to the furthest reaches and enabled him to accomplish his tasks in the world.¹⁴³ The Afrikaans woman's magazine, *Sarie Marais*, began a "Search for Jan van Riebeeck's Wife" for the pageant of the landing of the Dromedaris at Granger Bay. The essential criteria for the part were that she had to be small in stature, about 23 years of age and have dark eyes and light brown hair so as to match the Craey portrait. No acting abilities were required and judgement would be based on resemblance to the painting from a head and shoulders portrait photograph which contestants were asked to submit - "*kiekies*" [snapshots] were inadmissible. The winner would receive £75, travel to Cape Town, be dressed in an appropriate costume, and stand silently alongside the specially chosen eminent South African actor, Andre Huguenet, as he played the part of Jan van Riebeeck, first on board the Dromedaris, then on the beach of Granger Bay and later on the balcony at the Castle. Her only 'duty' was to serve wine to Jan and the accompanying soldiers and then to present him with the cask containing the 'Treasury of the Nation'.¹⁴⁴

The emergence of Maria from virtual obscurity in South African history to become Jan's silent partner on the beach at Granger Bay was partly related to the centrality of the discourse of *volksmoeder* to Afrikaner nationalism since the latter years of the first decade of the twentieth century. The maternal duty of Afrikaner women in the service of the *volk* was built around images of the suffering mother and child during the South African war, promoted by the Afrikaans poet Totius, in magazines and newspapers like *De Zuid-Afrikaan* and *Die Brandwag* and through organisations like the *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging* [Afrikaner Christian Women's Organisation] (ACVV).¹⁴⁵ This allusion of maternal duty to the *volk* was later encapsulated in the *Vrouemonument* which was unveiled in Bloemfontein in

¹⁴²*Cape Times*, 27 July 1951; *Nederlandse Post*, 15 April and 15 June 1952.

¹⁴³W C Mees, *Maria Quevellerius: Huisvrouw van Jan van Riebeeck*, Assen (1952), p.124.

¹⁴⁴*Sarie Marais*, 26 September 1951; *Die Volksblad*, 20 September 1951.

¹⁴⁵M du Toit, 'Women, Welfare and the Nurturing of Afrikaner Nationalism: A Social History of the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging, c.1870-1939', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cape Town (1996), pp.107-8.

1913 with its central image of a statue of a seated, forlorn looking woman with a dying child in her arms. Standing behind her is another woman, in voortrekker garb and bonnet, who gazes towards the horizon. Inscribed on the monument, a plaque indicates that it was erected "to remember the 26 370 women and children who died in concentration camps and other women and children who died in the war 1899-1902". Although, as Kruger points out, the proceedings around the unveiling of the monument did not emphasise motherhood, the visual imagery was that of a "weeping victim" where the suffering, stoic mother of children was expanded to become the mother of the *volk*, defined through the monument as the "*Vaderland*" [fatherland].¹⁴⁶ The appearance of this *volksmoeder* discourse in the first decade of the twentieth century largely arose from the concern, particularly among Dutch-Afrikaans speaking men, about women's changing role in society, the heated discussions around the extension of the franchise to women and the increasing numbers of women entering both the educational sphere and the workplace. Women's organisations like the *ACVV* were also extending and defending their operations beyond the realm of the home. In this context it was not sufficient to regard Afrikaner women as merely part of the domestic sphere but to incorporate the private domain of mothering into the service of the *volk*.¹⁴⁷ In the 1920s, with white Afrikaans speaking women moving in even larger numbers into urban areas, taking up employment in factories, and with the enfranchisement of white women becoming imminent, patriarchal relations of domination in 'white' households came under increasing threat. Within Afrikaner nationalist circles it became politically increasingly necessary to actively encourage women to enter the public sphere, but still to define this participation through the home and the mother.¹⁴⁸ There was a consistent attempt to promote a link between motherhood and

¹⁴⁶Personal visit to the Vrouemonument, Bloemfontein, April 1995; L Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity: Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the Volksmoeder Discourse of Die Boerevrou (1919-1931)', M Soc Sci thesis, University of Cape Town (1991), pp.142-3; Van der Watt, 'Art, Gender Ideology' pp. 47-8; A McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, New York (1995), p. 378; A McClintock, 'Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family', *Feminist Review*, 44 (Summer 1993), p.72. For an account of images of male supremacy in the commemorative publications of the monument see, E Cloete, 'The National Women's Monument Brochures: A Rhetoric of Male Supremacy', unpublished conference paper, *Myths, Monuments, Museums: New Premises?*, University of Witwatersrand, 16-18 July 1992.

¹⁴⁷Du Toit, 'Women, Welfare and the Nurturing', pp.115-131. Du Toit makes the very important point that *volksmoeder* discourse was not merely a male imposition but was shaped by Dutch-Afrikaans speaking women.

¹⁴⁸J Hyslop, 'White Working-Class Women and the Invention of Apartheid 'Purified' Afrikaner Nationalist Agitation for Legislation against "Mixed" Marriages, 1934-1939, *Journal of African History*, 36 (1995), pp. 60-5; Du Toit, 'Women, Welfare and the Nurturing', pp.201-3.

serving the needs of the Afrikaner nation through magazines like *Die Huisgenoot* and *Die Boerevrou*. Coupling ethnic and gender identities through the idealised 'mother in the house' as a universal category provided the bonding to shore up the imagined community of white Afrikaners. *Die Boerevrou* linked motherhood with the promotion of the 'Afrikaner nation'. Afrikaner women were assigned the task of bearing, rearing and educating Afrikaner children for the *volk*, both in the private sphere of the home and in the public arena of welfare organisations. To be an effective *volksmoeder* meant to reproduce not only in physiological terms but also to advance the *volk* through "support [of], interest [in] and dedication" to an Afrikaner history, language and culture.¹⁴⁹

The construction of the *volksmoeder* not only relied upon establishing a sense of internal coherence but also on situating the discourse in antagonism to an external identity posed as a threat, in this case black men and women. This 'peril' was located within both the domestic and public spheres, where job protection and maintaining the 'purity' of Afrikaners in the household were articulated, in magazines like *Die Boerevrou*, by asserting racial exclusivity and superiority.¹⁵⁰ In the 1930s the much more virulent form of Afrikaner nationalism which emerged under the auspices of the *Gesuiwerede Nasionale Party* (Purified National Party) and the Afrikaner Broederbond took this racial enmity even further, railing against trade unions like the Garment Workers Union for not providing adequate job security for its members, who were largely white Afrikaner women, against black workers in the clothing industry and conducting election campaigns around the issue of racially mixed marriages. In the 1938 general election campaign, Afrikaner men were cast as the saviours of white women from the 'grasp' of black men. According to Hyslop, this campaign was used to reassert the control which Afrikaner men had gradually lost as women were becoming both sexually and economically independent in urban environments. The idea of *volksmoeder* encompassed and indeed depended upon this sense of a racial othering to demarcate its boundaries and constitute its communal membership.¹⁵¹ Visually this was embodied in the thirteen foot high

¹⁴⁹Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity'. Kruger provides an extensive discussion of the emergence and the meaning of the *volksmoeder* discourse in the 1920s.

¹⁵⁰Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', pp.300-308.

¹⁵¹Hyslop, 'White Working-Class Women', p.63; Du Toit, 'Women, Welfare and the Nurturing', pp.276-7; L Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', p.307. For an account of the Afrikaner nationalist

statue of a Voortrekker woman at the entrance to the Voortrekker monument, providing protection to two children. The statue, in the words of the monument's designer and architect, Gerard Moerdyk, was to mark the pivotal role that Voortrekker women had played in bringing whiteness to the southern African interior by accompanying their husbands. In its position of prominence it was symbolic of "White South Africa" warding off the forces of darkness and 'barbarity' as represented in the sculptures of black *wildebeeste* [gnus] embedded in the rock alongside. The zig-zag design at the top of the actual monument, was intended to symbolise fertility and the *volksmoeder* in her reproductive role in "making and keeping South Africa a white **man's** country".¹⁵²

When members of the FAK went to express their misgivings about the proposed pageant to Reeler it was precisely on these grounds of asserting and maintaining racial purity that they articulated their disappointment over the exclusion of women from Van Riebeeck's history for 1952. It was the women, they asserted, who had provided the men with white companions and who had held the family together, and thereby were "*absoluut deurslaggewend*" [absolutely essential] in ensuring "*die blankheid van die ontwikkelende volk*" [the whiteness of the developing volk].¹⁵³ An article on the "Pioneer Life of the First Farmers" in the special Van Riebeeck festival edition of *The Woman and her Home* similarly placed great emphasis on the role of the woman as homemaker in the sense of maintaining both domesticity and racial purity in the "unsettled" world of the frontier. Women were commended for turning the wagon into a home where they could make clothes, soap, biltong (jerked meat) and bread. It was also through marriage that the women enabled the men to preserve 'their race', the

campaigns against the Garment Workers Union, see L Witz, 'Servant of the Workers: Solly Sachs and the Garment Workers Union', Unpublished MA thesis, Wits University (1984), ch.5.

¹⁵²'Official Programme: Inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument', Pretoria (1949), pp.46-7. The emphasis is mine. See also E Delmont, 'The Voortrekker Monument', p. 100. Anne McClintock (*Imperial Leather*, pp.377-8) also argues that the *Gedenkboek* of the *Ossewatrek* (Commemorative Album of the Ox Wagon Trek) of 1938 presents, through its photographs, a similar imagery. Women in immaculate white bonnets and dresses "serve as boundary markers visibly upholding the fetish signs of national difference and visibly embodying the iconography of race and gender purity".

¹⁵³'Bedenkinge in verband met die historiese volksoptog', 4 August 1951, INCH, PV 379, A11/13.

"bond" preventing those "who for two centuries had so little contact with the civilised world, from falling into miscegenation".¹⁵⁴

Much as the Van Riebeeck festival was not a direct outcome of the political machinations of Afrikaner nationalism, this emphasis on white women in 1952 symbolised in the iconisation of Maria was not solely an extension of *volksmoeder* discourse. There was also the popularisation of her image as the Cape's first lady, in the sense of being the wife of a colonial governor of the Cape - although Van Riebeeck was not a governor but a commander - and someone who combined tolerance with an appropriate application of knowledge. In this appellation as a "lady" she acquired a series of physical and moral virtues: "fair skin and intelligent eyes" with a look that spoke of "*beslistheid*" [decisiveness] and "*deugdelike dog gedistingeerde vroulikheid*" [virtuous yet distinguished womanhood], "dark hair and a generous mouth", "practical common sense", "courage and determination" and "patience and understanding".¹⁵⁵ This "*sjarmante vrou*" [charming woman] with a much less ambiguously noble ancestry than Jan, bore a very close resemblance to the colonial images of Lady Anne Barnard that had been fostered by Dorothea Fairbridge in the 1910s and '20s and were now being advertised in the programme for the pageant of the past as those of "culture and refinement". As with Lady Anne it was this gentility that enabled Maria to 'bring the races together' by hosting parties of both English and Dutch men at the fort in an imaginary "little Colony".¹⁵⁶ Maria de la Quellerie became a "woman of breeding", who, after being welcomed by "a group of savages" at the Cape, lived a "lonely, isolated life" because she had no one from "her own social sphere" with whom to communicate and she feared the "little, brown Hottentot men". Yet, it was this isolation that made Maria, more than Jan (who sometimes dirtied his hands in the employ of the Company) the bearer of a European racial essence that

¹⁵⁴*The Woman and Her Home*, March 1952, pp.61-2.

¹⁵⁵G M Mills, *First Ladies of the Cape*, Cape Town (1952), p.2; A de Villiers, 'Ook Maria Van Riebeeck Moet Geer Word', *Die Huisgenoot*, 7 March 1952; C Louis Leipoldt, *Jan Van Riebeeck*, London (1935), p.244; E M Berman, 'City Will Honour Cape's First Lady', *Cape Times*, 27 July 1951; I M Wilson, *They Founded for the Future*, Cape Town (1952), p.14.

¹⁵⁶A de Villiers, 'Eerste Vroue aan die Kaap', *Sarie Marais*, 26 September 1951; *Official Festival Programme*, p.108; Mills, *First Ladies of the Cape*, p.16. See chapter one for Fairbridge's portrayals of both Maria and Lady Anne Barnard.

was constituted in social terms as innately aristocratic, her blue blood bestowing on the Company fort the title of "THE FIRST HOME" at the Cape 'colony'.¹⁶⁶

Maria's colonial imagery coalesced with a shift that was starting to occur in Afrikaner nationalist discourses of women in the 1950s. The narrative of Afrikaner women as housewives and mothers of the community of the *volk* began to incorporate a much greater sense of modernity rather than relying on a pastness of tradition. This was no more evident than in the magazine which had launched the search for Maria de la Quellerie, *Sarie Marais*. Published in the Cape by Nasionale Pers, which also published *Die Burger*, it marketed itself primarily to young Afrikaans speaking women. Although there were items of historical interest, its areas of concentration were stories of romance and how Afrikaner women had achieved success. An example of the latter was a feature by Andre Huguenet, where he looked at the role of five women who were involved in staging and acting in dramatic productions. Included in Huguenet's article was a brief account dealing with the founder of the *Volksteater* [National Theatre] in Pretoria, Anna Neethling-Pohl.¹⁶⁷ In 1951/2 *Sarie Marais* also ran a controversial column entitled "*Sê my Dokter*" [Tell me Doctor], in which a doctor gave advice to "*moeders, jong vroue, dogters*" [mothers, young women, daughters] on "*besondere siekte en gevare waaraan hulle as vroue blootgestel is*" [specific ailments and dangers to which they are exposed as women]. Letters flooded in to the magazine, some offering support for the knowledge function the column was supposed to be performing, but others condemning it for showing no respect for the privacy of the body. The editor defended the column on the basis that medical knowledge was an absolute necessity for the modern woman.¹⁶⁸ This modern woman, as characterised on the front cover of *Sarie Marais*, wore the latest fashions, smoked cigarettes - which were manufactured by the Rembrandt Tobacco Corporation in factories where the employment of "white girls" was preferred - and drank tea. The latter image represented a marked shift away from *Die Boerevrou* where the drinking of coffee had been the metaphorical device used to draw the women into a bounded community around the imaginative ceremony of imbibing the *volksdrank* [volk's drink]. Drinking of tea was regarded

¹⁶⁶Mills, *First Ladies of the Cape*, pp.1, 9; Wilson, *They Founded for the Future*, p.16.

¹⁶⁷*Sarie Marais*, 23 January 1952.

¹⁶⁸*Sarie Marais*, 26 December 1951.

as the preserve of those who were "uppity" and would not associate with the 'real' *boerevrou* around the coffee table.¹⁶⁰ By 1952 tea drinking had established an association with a knowledge of the modern world and the "Women of South Africa" became 'ladies' who were now to be found sitting "Round the Tea Table" discussing matters of topicality rather than communality.¹⁶¹

Although white women were still identified with the home and Maria was given the appellation of "THE FIRST HOME MAKER",¹⁶² the person who won the competition to "Act Van Riebeeck's Wife at [the] Festival"¹⁶³ was more than merely a face to match the Craey portrait. Frances Holland from Durban was an actress who had appeared on stage, in movies and on radio. Apparently quite fortuitously she was, as well, a descendant of both the 1820 settlers from England and the Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius, thus embodying (and reproducing) the drawing together of the European 'races' which Lady Anne Barnard and Maria de la Quellerie had previously worked towards and which Jan van Riebeeck was ritualising in 1952. Her husband, Douglas Fuchs, was the regional director of the South African Broadcasting Corporation in Natal, a good friend of Andre Huguenet and the chair of the Durban Van Riebeeck festival committee. Yet, it was as Frances Holland and not as *Mevrou Douglas Fuchs* [Mrs Douglas Fuchs] that Maria took her place on the beach alongside Andre Huguenet in 1952.¹⁶⁴ In a ceremony from which she had previously been excluded by both the company diarist and the artistic imagination of Charles Davidson Bell, she now "stood at Jan's side in the presence of the men who formed his small band of pioneers and ... listened to the simple service when he planted the flag".¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰Kruger, 'Gender, Community and Identity', pp. 244-7; O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, p.204. O'Meara gives a brief and fascinating account of the emergence of the Rembrandt Corporation and its employment policies, pp.201-5.

¹⁶¹'Round the Tea-Table', *The Woman and Her Home*, March 1952, p.51.

¹⁶²Wilson, *They Founded for the Future*, p.14.

¹⁶³*Cape Times*, 18 August 1951.

¹⁶⁴*Sarie Marais*, 20 February 1952.

¹⁶⁵Mills, *First Ladies of the Cape*, p.6.

The "Hunt for the 'Ideal South African Woman'"¹⁶⁶ did not manage entirely to clear the way for the landing of the Van Riebeecks on 5 April 1952 and the production of their past in the streets of Cape Town on the preceding two days. Indeed, it was the overseers of *Van Riebeeck se stad* [Van Riebeeck's city], where Van Riebeeck had landed and where the mayor presided over Council meetings in a seat named Van Riebeeck's chair, that were proving to be a major obstacle to staging the past. The central committee had estimated that the cost of the festival would be in the region of £350 000. With the government willing to provide a £125 000 sponsorship and the Cape Provincial Administration £50 000, the Cape Town City Council was asked to contribute £75 000 to make up some of the leeway. Taking into account the income that would be derived from visitors to the city during the period of the festivities and the possibility that any surplus funds could be used to develop a cultural centre in Cape Town, such a proposal was not seen as unreasonable by the festival committee.¹⁶⁷ But with the city facing a deficit of almost one million pounds and accusations in the local press that spending the money on a one-off festival would be a waste of ratepayers' money, the City Council vacillated for over six months before deciding how much it would contribute towards the festival.¹⁶⁸

Given the Cape Town City Council's interest in the mid-1940s in organising the annual wreath-laying ceremony at the base of the statue in Adderley Street, its initial enthusiasm for organising its own Van Riebeeck festival and the participation of the mayor on both the central and Cape Town committees for the festival appointed by the government, such a lukewarm response might seem surprising. Clearly pecuniary issues were at stake as the City Council had not envisaged spending large sums of money when it had initially embraced the idea of a Van Riebeeck festival. The Town Clerk, in 1948, had drawn upon the examples of the "simple thanksgiving service[s]" in 1752 and 1852 to advocate a similar type of commemoration in 1952.¹⁶⁹ But the major problem lay with the manner that Van Riebeeck

¹⁶⁶*Cape Times*, 18 August 1951.

¹⁶⁷Minutes of Meeting of Cape Town City Council, 27 September 1951, CA, 3/CT, 1/1/1/112; *Cape Times* and *Die Burger*, 21 July 1951.

¹⁶⁸Minutes of Meeting of Cape Town City Council, 27 September 1951, CA, 3/CT, 1/1/1/112; *Die Burger*, *The Star*, *Cape Argus*, 28 September 1951.

¹⁶⁹*Cape Times*, 12 January 1948.

Philanthropists" after the objections from industrial concerns in the Transvaal, he suggested, was a "falsification of history"; what it should show was how missionaries had enabled the process of slave emancipation to take place and how they had consistently pointed to the inhumane treatment of black labourers. The "Freedom of the Press" float which placed an emphasis on the 'independent' development of the settler population, he asserted, should become much more all-embracing so as to encapsulate the "Struggle for Personal Liberty". As the scripted pageant of Van Riebeeck's past, stood, however, Kahn considered it to be merely reflective of a limiting notion of South African nationhood, encompassing only whites, and that the City Council should therefore not contribute a single penny towards the festival.¹⁷³

Although Kahn did not have whole-hearted support for his recommendation in the Council, there were sufficient reservations not to approve the £75 000 until a specially designated deputation had met with the Cape Town committee of the Van Riebeeck festival to discuss the Council's problems with the programme. The meeting with the delegation led by Kahn, which took place on 24 August 1951, was quite unremarkable, the Cape Town committee studiously noting down every point made, promising to pass on the queries to the pageant committee and then to forward their reply as hastily as possible to the Council's finance committee so that it could make a recommendation on sponsoring the festival.¹⁷⁴ Five days later the pageant committee met and sat for four hours drafting a response to the City Council, hoping that in so doing they would show that they had "honestly endeavoured to portray Western Civilization in South Africa" and that they would thereby "satisfy critics".¹⁷⁵

The pageant committee, forced to articulate a link between specific historical episodes that it intended to portray and the thematic conceptualisation of the festival, forwarded a document to the finance committee of the Cape Town City Council in September 1951 which attempted to clarify and justify its nationing claims. There were two ways in which this was expounded. The first reasserted the festival as a display of a nation with a past that was historically

¹⁷³ 'Reply to criticisms of the Pageant', *Cape Argus*, 1 August 1951; *The Friend*, 18 August 1951.

¹⁷⁴ *Cape Argus*, 25 August 1951.

¹⁷⁵ 'Reply to criticisms of the Pageant'.

authentic. Many of Kahn's suggestions and amendments were carefully and meticulously attacked on 'historical grounds' as inaccurate and false. Conversely, items included in the pageant programme were defended as "objective portrayals of historical facts". The prime example of this resort to historicity was when the document dealt with Kahn's proposal that the emancipation of slaves be linked to the 'Great Trek'. Using Theal's *History of South Africa* and Agar Hamilton's *Native Policy of the Voortrekkers*, the committee provided evidence that the trekkers had not opposed the "gradual manu-mission" of slaves and that when they had established independent Republics in the north, slavery had been outlawed. In these terms Kahn's suggestion was not only inappropriate but totally out of order as it was a "falsification of history". When it came to giving the pageant as a whole an historical stamp of approval the authority upon which the document drew was the Superintendent General of Education Dr W de Vos Malan, who had praised the scripted past for its "accuracy, completeness and impartiality".¹⁷⁶ Even though the decision not to evoke the word of Prof H B Thom in this specific context might have been because of his close association with Afrikaner nationalist politics, the choice of de Vos Malan seemed to infer that history as it was transmitted in the classroom was the generally approved and acceptable past.

Secondly, the document explicitly provided a racial classification for the nationing that the festival and the pageant were attempting to display. The nation and its past that the festival was concerned with, it claimed, were those of the "European race groups" from England, Holland, France and Germany who, in the committee's terms, were responsible for the "growth and development of Western Civilization in South Africa". Those who were considered not to have this line of descent, "the Coloured and African", were assigned to different racial categories of 'non-European' and 'native' and would be incorporated into exclusive pasts and allocated a "Special Pageant". This was more than merely a reiteration of some of the suggestions that had come up during the early planning stages of the festival, when the idea of possible separate displays for coloureds had been mooted by the FAK. Faced with the need to specify the nation racially, the organisers were now defining the "non-European" as a counter to "us", the 'pure' and, at the same time, indigeneous South African "European" nation. The latter would provide assistance to the former to "find his place [and

¹⁷⁶ Reply to criticisms of the Pageant', *Cape Times*, 20 September 1951.

his past] in the pattern of this new unity-in-diversity of the South African state". This "place" would be "his own legitimate sphere" in separate nations defined by racial essence.¹⁷⁷

Of course, there were problems when this racial separation being proposed for the festival was countered by the "facts", as suggested in a letter written to the *Cape Argus*. The writer claimed that as the Dutch governor Simon Van der Stel's mother was an Indian woman from Mauritius, he should be played by a coloured man in the pageant.¹⁷⁸ Such supposed 'facts', which could prove to be uncomfortable, were not even considered by the pageant committee. Instead it stuck rigidly to the general guidelines that were to be followed for "non-European" participation in the Van Riebeeck festival which insisted upon "special" events for those who were not part of the "new nation". On the one hand, these events were to display an essential "non-European" lifestyle: "tribal" structures, "natural" musical rhythms, craftwork and home industries. On the other hand there were clear guidelines to exhibit "*die invloed van die Westerse-beskawing op die Nie-blankes*" [the influence of Western civilisation on the Non-whites]. This involved replacing the superstitious with the rational - the "*verdwyning van toordery*" [disappearance of witchcraft] - the "*ou stamwette*" [old tribal laws] with "Western" forms of government, polygamy with "*huislike lewe*" [family life] and incessant "*stamoorloë*" [tribal wars] with "*Persoonlike Vryheid*" [Personal Freedom]. Ultimately, under 'Western' tutelage, the outcome would be the development of separate, but as yet not clearly defined, "*Nie-blanke ... onafhanklike eenhede*" [Non-White independent units].¹⁷⁹

On the basis of these guidelines, the festival committee decided that for those they defined as the "native population", the festivities would consist of events depicting "*die betekenis van die blanke beskawing vir die Naturelle*" [the meaning of white civilization for the Natives].¹⁸⁰ Primarily this would be visible through a display which would be constructed at the festival

¹⁷⁷Reply to criticisms of the Pageant'; W E G Louw, 'We Build a Nation', Speech given at Humansdorp, 10 March 1952, US, 158.L.1.T. 12 (7).

¹⁷⁸*Cape Argus*, 24 August 1951.

¹⁷⁹Agenda of meeting of the Central Organising Committee, Van Riebeeck Festival, 29 November 1951, US, Thom, Box 49.

¹⁸⁰Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of Van Riebeeck Festival, 3 November 1950, US, Thom, Box 49.

fair by the Native Affairs Department (NAD), depicting a "Bantu village" showing the transformation of 'native life' from a state of tribalism to one of modernity, under the guidance of Europeans. In the latter state the "Bantu" would be able to "serve his own people". There was to be no pageant in the streets of Cape Town in which Africans could participate but the NAD planned to hold a "*Bantoe-fees* [festival for the Bantu]" at Langa where there would be sporting activities, open-air film shows, choir competitions and where "*'n aantal beeste vir die mense geslag word* [a number of cattle would be slaughtered for the people]".¹⁸¹ These planned events, when linked through the festival with the symbols of white nationhood in the past and present, were a component of the government's attempts to portray the control and management of the growing urban African population by the Native Affairs Department "as part of the natural evolution and structuring of South African society".¹⁸² Africans were marked as essentially tribal, having no place in the 'Western' city except as sojourners to perform labouring tasks, although the specific terms of their temporary location were contested and remained undefined until the late 1950s. Their 'natural' place and history were therefore not in 'the west', but in a "separate sphere" where the modernising 'tribe' would enable them to "cultivate their traditions".¹⁸³ In the western Cape, this took on a very distinctive form as a policy which gave preferential employment to labourers who were racially labelled as coloured rather than native was implemented. Through the Coloured Labour Preference Policy, which was also administered through the NAD, the western Cape, and Cape Town in particular, was constructed as 'unAfrican', a place of European founding and settlement with workers who were 'coloured' and not essentially 'tribal'. Areas where Africans lived in the Cape Peninsula, like Windermere, were described by a "ratepayer", who urged the Council to support the Van Riebeeck festival, as a "stain ... at our main entrance".¹⁸⁴ Excised from 'the west', its cities, its histories and its place of founding (the 'mother city'),

¹⁸¹*Cape Times*, 3 December 1951; *Natal Daily News*, 5 December 1951; Agenda van Vergadering van Sentrale Komitee, 29 November 1951, US, Thom, Box 49. For an account of the NAD display at the festival fair see chapter four.

¹⁸²C Rassool and L Witz, 'Constructing and Contesting', p.450.

¹⁸³*Daily Dispatch*, 9 September 1948. This argument relies upon Debbie Posel's analysis in *The Making of Apartheid* that there was no grand master plan for apartheid when the Nationalists took power in 1948 but that over the next ten years it was formulated through struggles over its different elements.

¹⁸⁴*Cape Times*, 11 October 1951.

it is not altogether surprising that when Van Riebeeck landed at Granger Bay in 1952 he found that "the Bantu" were "not indigenous to South Africa". In fact he "never saw the bantu" until the second half of the eighteenth century when "Governor Joachim van Plettenberg ... established the Fish River as the boundary between the European and the non-European". As the *Rand Daily Mail* put it rather facetiously, there was not even going to be a "very small float, somewhere at the back" which contained a hint of a suggestion that "the non-Europeans may have taken some little part in the development of the country".¹⁸⁵

People who were defined not as 'natives' or 'bantu' but at the same time still 'non-European', were to "organise their own programme" under the direction of the Commissioner for Coloured Affairs, I D du Plessis.¹⁸⁶ A special day in the final week of the festival programme, prior to the "People's Pageant" and the landing of Van Riebeeck, was to be set aside "for the Coloured and Malay communities". Anna Neethling-Pohl would assist in organising events for the day which would take place in the main arena, the 50 000 seater festival stadium, on Wednesday 2 April.¹⁸⁷ Clearly, people designated coloured were being assigned a past in the 'progress' of 'western civilisation' but still apart from Van Riebeeck and his history. This accorded with notions of coloureds as "good old types" who were 'reliable' workers and docile subjects.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, up until the 1920s, some coloureds, who spoke Afrikaans and generally followed the Islamic religion, and were specified as Malay, were considered by Afrikaner nationalists to be part of South African history as the oldest element of the *volk* who had arrived at the same time as the whites and had always been civilised. It was only when Afrikaner identity became associated much more closely with whiteness, particularly in the 1930s, that a Malay identity as separate and clearly distinguishable from an Afrikaner one was widely promoted. I D du Plessis, the poet and journalist who held a post as lecturer in the Department of Afrikaans and Nederlands at the University of Cape Town before devoting his full-time attention to the Coloured Affairs Department, spent a great deal of time

¹⁸⁵*South Africa's Heritage*, p.66; *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 July 1951.

¹⁸⁶Agenda of meeting of the Central Organising Committee, Van Riebeeck Festival, 29 Nov 1951, US, Thom, Box 49.

¹⁸⁷Agenda of meeting of the Central Organising Committee, Van Riebeeck Festival, 29 Nov 1951, US, Thom, Box 49; *Cape Times*, 11 October 1951.

¹⁸⁸*Daily Dispatch*, 9 September 1948.

constructing a Malay history and culture, so much so that D F Malan labelled him the "*slamse koning*" [king of the Malays].¹⁸⁹ In 1944 Du Plessis published a book entitled *The Cape Malays* in which he defined a "pure" Malay physical type, - just over five foot high, with "olive skin", a "flattish face, high cheekbones, black (slightly slanting) eyes, a small nose, wide nostrils, a large mouth, hands and feet small and delicately formed, thin legs, coarse, straight black hair and a sparse beard", assigned them specific customs and traditions - among these was the "Malay sword dance known as the *Chalifah*" and the "magic" of "Malay tricks" - and selected a Malay history which revolved around a Van Riebeeck-type founder figure in the form of Sheik Yusuf, who was banished to the Cape from the Dutch East Indies in 1694, and which included their participation in battles alongside colonial troops, sometimes against the 'natives' on the frontier.¹⁹⁰ When Du Plessis was appointed chair of the "Malay and Coloured" sub-committee of the Van Riebeeck festival, he brought all this 'knowledge of the Malay' with him. He concentrated on developing a programme for Malay participation in the festival that virtually coincided with the various sections in his book. There were two elements to this. The first consisted of an exhibition of Malay arts and crafts that was to be displayed as part of the "Historical Exhibition of the Arts" in the Castle of Good Hope, but in a "coffee room specially set aside by the military authorities". The exhibition was to be one of colour, "customs, rituals and observances", where the work on display was not categorised as art (as was the rest of the exhibition in the Castle) but as a collection of domestic household items that revealed the "lure of the exotic" in Malay "civilisation and culture".¹⁹¹ Secondly, the script for the Malay pageant on Wednesday 2 April that Du Plessis presented to the festival committee was saturated with the religion, customs, traditions and 'tricks' of the Cape Malay that he had re-produced in his published text. At the beginning of the procession, of course, there was history, and Sheik Yusuf was to step ashore with two wives, fourteen friends and some servants to be welcomed by the governor of the Cape, William Adriaan van der Stel. For coloureds who were not defined as Malay, no details had yet been worked out but a space

¹⁸⁹M Shamil Jeppie, 'Historical Processes and the Constitution of Subjects: I.D. du Plessis and the Reinvention of the "Malay"', Unpublished BA Honours long essay, University of Cape Town (1987), p.9. For the beginnings of the construction of a separate Malay identity see pp.17-28.

¹⁹⁰I D du Plessis, *The Cape Malays*, Cape Town (1944), pp.3, 37, 71-6, 3-7, 47-8.

¹⁹¹Catalogue, *Historical Exhibition of Arts, The Castle, Cape Town*, Van Riebeeck Festival Arts Committee, Cape Town (1952), p.9; Catalogue, *Exhibition of Malay Arts and Crafts*, J Ryan Pty Ltd, Cape Town (1952), p.3; M Masson, 'Festival "Merry-Go-Round"', *Cape Times*, 20 March 1952.

in the programme was left open so as to allow "*enige georganiseerde groepe kleurlinge*" [any organised coloured groupings] the opportunity to take part in Van Riebeeck's festival.¹⁹²

The finance committee did not receive all the details on 'non-white' participation outlined above but, on the basis of the explanation and information for 'special events' that was conveyed to it, it decided to recommend to the City Council that it should contribute £50 000 towards the festival. Kahn considered the festival committee's reply to be lame and feeble; all it did was display how the events being conceptualised would be discriminatory, partisan and laden with historical distortions. He argued that £50 000 was still excessive and reiterated that the Council should make no monetary grant to the festival. Other members of the Council, unwilling to antagonise the government and the festival committee, were more willing to compromise and, after a three-and-half hour debate behind closed doors on 27 September 1951, the Council decided by 18 votes to 15 to contribute only £25 000.¹⁹³ Joyce Newton Thompson was incensed and on 12 October 1951 she submitted a motion for the decision to be rescinded and for the Council to grant at least £50 000 towards Van Riebeeck and his festival. Her call received the support of the editors of both *Die Burger* and the *Cape Times*, the former accusing the Council of merely penny-pinching and the latter claiming it was causing irreparable harm by playing the "dog in the manger role" and voting a totally insufficient amount.¹⁹⁴ Other councillors also backed the resolution to rescind the £25 000 grant in order to "further race relations", where races were defined in terms of European derivatives.¹⁹⁵ Kahn rejected these pleas for reconsideration out of hand.

If I thought this was being organized truly as representative of Western civilization I would have supported it. But what Western civilization has apartheid? This Festival is a tawdry, meretricious interpretation of our history. It entirely excludes non-Europeans. The challenge to us is whether we regard non-Europeans as part of our nation or not. If our slogan is 'We Build a

¹⁹² Agenda of meeting of the Central Organising Committee, Van Riebeeck Festival, 29 Nov 1951, US, Thom, Box 49. The reference to William Adriaan Van der Stel was an error. The governor at the Cape in 1694 was Simon van der Stel.

¹⁹³ Minutes, Meeting Cape Town City Council, 27 September 1951, CA, 3/CT, 1/1/1/12; *Die Burger*, *The Star*, *Cape Argus*, 28 September 1951.

¹⁹⁴ *Die Burger*, 28 September 1951; *Cape Times*, 3 October 1951.

¹⁹⁵ *Cape Argus*, 12 October 1951.

Nation' the non-Europeans must take part. But the Government is slashing and dividing the nation. Their motto should be 'We Divide a Nation'.¹⁹⁶

Once again a lengthy debate ensued and when the time came to vote, the Council was split exactly down the middle (19 votes both for and against). After it had "wrangled for months for the few paltry pounds to be spent", the original motion to grant £25 000 to the festival stood and Cape Town was accused by the promoters of Van Riebeeck of forgetting South Africa.¹⁹⁷

Yet the Cape Town City Council had not abandoned Van Riebeeck entirely. As Fritz Sonnenberg, the mayor of Cape Town, pointed out, the City's Engineer's department had spent huge amounts of time clearing up and transforming the "sandy waste" of the reclaimed foreshore into a suitable festival venue. At its own cost - £10 000 - it had floodlit the approaches and a replica of the Van Riebeeck statue, provided a parking area and erected temporary street lighting. With funding from the festival committee it had constructed a temporary substation and installed the necessary cables to provide electricity to the site where the pavilions and the stadium were located. The festival committee was later billed £84 530 by the Council for these services, which included £7 924 for traffic control. When the latter amount was queried by the festival committee, which considered it part of the normal line of the traffic officers' duty, it was reduced by £5 000 in consideration for the "underlying purposes of the festival". The town planning department supervised the layout of the fair grounds and the tent camps where visitors could stay and the siting of parking areas and the stadium. The Council also provided £12 000 for building a Cape Town pavilion at the festival fair, allowed the festival free use of the City Hall and the City orchestra (salaries of members for the period, totalling £5 374, were met by the Council) and sent a bust of Van Riebeeck which cost £473 to the town of Culemborg. Finally the Council paid for an advertisement for Cape Town inside the official festival programme at a price of £150. Sam Kahn consistently opposed many of these allocations but was unable to put a halt to the support for these various projects by the Council. The only other festival scheme that the Council opposed was

¹⁹⁶*Cape Argus*, 12 October 1951.

¹⁹⁷*Cape Argus*, 12 October 1951; Minutes, Meeting Cape Town City Council, 12 October 1951, CA, 3/CT 1/1/1/112; *Cape Times*, 27 February 1951.

sponsoring a mail coach on the basis that it was illogical to have a Cape Town coach approaching its own city.¹⁹⁸ Given these contributions to his past, Van Riebeeck could not have been entirely unhappy with the Cape Town City Council. Moreover, the scheme to "eliminate ... black spots" in the Cape Peninsula where Africans were squatting on the borders of "European" territory and the erosion of any voting power Africans might have had in municipal areas by zoning areas in which they lived into single large wards, thus effectively reducing the number of councillors they could vote for, was also consistent with the emerging policies of racial separation and domination that the government was pursuing.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, in one instance the Central Committee used Cape Town as an example of how apartheid was going to be implemented at the festival. Drawing on the case of Newlands rugby grounds in the city, where there were separate stands for coloured and white spectators, it assured Nationalist Party members that, likewise, apartheid was going to be "properly applied" at the festival. There would be segregated seating arrangements at the festival stadium and separate entrances to the fair grounds, the refreshment facilities, the post office on the site and the replica of Van Riebeeck's home town, Culemborg.²⁰⁰ The contradiction between what the *Argus* romanticised as "the old, happy life of the Cape, with its tradition of fair play for all races" and apartheid was not as marked as to make Cape Town "un-national" and "merely an appendage" of Van Riebeeck's South Africa.²⁰¹

By the end of 1951 many of the arrangements for the festival had been set in place and, although Granger Bay had not been cleared entirely of its rubble, the arrival of Jan and Maria van Riebeeck on its beach now seemed imminent. But in the early months of 1952 all the planning which had gone into the festival events in Cape Town was very nearly destroyed and, at the same time, reinforced. The crisis for Van Riebeeck revolved around the Nationalist

¹⁹⁸*Cape Times*, 28 February 1952; Minutes, Cape Town City Council, 30 October 1951, 29 November 1951, 24 December 1951, CA, 3/CT 1/1/1/112; 28 August 1952, CA, 3/CT 1/1/1/113; Mayor's Minute for the Year ended 4 September 1953, including Report of the City Engineer for year ended 31 December 1952, CA, 3/CT 1/7/1/50.

¹⁹⁹Y Muthien, 'Pass Control and Resistance, Cape Town 1939-1965', unpublished PhD thesis, Oxford (1989), p.189; *Cape Times*, 29 February 1952.

²⁰⁰House of Assembly Debates, Hansard, 13 June 1951, pp.9397-8, 9482-3; *Cape Times*, 12 March and 9 April 1952.

²⁰¹*Cape Argus*, 28 September 1951; *Cape Times*, 27 and 29 February 1952.

Party's intentions to disenfranchise coloured voters. To effect this action it had passed through parliament, in the first half of 1951, the Separate Representation of Voters Act. The constitutionality of this act was challenged by the United Party, firstly in the Cape Supreme Court where the application was dismissed with costs by Justices J E de Villiers, G Steyn and C Newton Thompson who found that a court of law cannot question the validity of an act of parliament. It was then taken on appeal, to be heard in front of five judges of the Appellate division, headed by Justice A Centlivres. The scheduling of the case for 20 February 1952 meant that judgement would in all probability be delivered as the Van Riebeeck festival was about to begin. Sensing that the judgement might put the festival in jeopardy, the chair of the Central Committee, A J van der Merwe, wrote to Centlivres asking him to "ensure goodwill" by postponing the delivery of the court's ruling until after the festival. Van der Merwe was concerned that the judgement could cause a rift in the "*hele blanke bevolking*" [whole white population] that was being so assiduously constructed through Van Riebeeck and the accompanying festivities.²⁰² He felt so distressed at the repercussions that he persuaded the prime minister, D F Malan, to write a letter to Centlivres along similar lines. But their protestations were to no avail, and after a dispute over who could make the decision to postpone the case, judgement was delivered on 20 March 1952, just three weeks before Van Riebeeck was due to land and with the festival fair already in full swing.²⁰³ The court ruled against the government and declared the act invalid. Malan and the Nationalist Party were angered by the judgement, claiming that it had created a totally untenable constitutional position and that the United Party, in taking up the case, had acted as if it was an agent of imperialism.²⁰⁴ This response by the ruling party and the decision of the court led to massive protest marches throughout the country under the auspices by the ex-servicemen's organisation, the Torch Commando, where demands were made for the government to resign and for "the restoration of democratic government".²⁰⁵ What was significant for Van Riebeeck and his festival was that the events surrounding the court's decision were being couched by

²⁰²*Die Burger*, 20 March 1952.

²⁰³For a detailed account of all the controversies and issues surrounding the judgement, see D M Scher, 'The Disenfranchisement of the Coloured Voters, 1948-1956', unpublished PhD thesis, UNISA (1983), ch.7.

²⁰⁴*Cape Times*, 25 March 1952.

²⁰⁵*Cape Times*, 17 April 1952.

both those favouring and those opposed to it as a 'constitutional crisis'. In these terms the judgement had nothing to do with coloured voters per se and was all about politics defined as an arena in which whites were the exclusive role-players. This was most explicitly expressed by the editor of the *Cape Times*:

The fight to preserve the democratic principles of our Constitution is one between Europeans and the non-Europeans would be well advised to leave the struggle to the Europeans.²⁰⁶

This notion of politics as the preserve of the whites enabled Van Riebeeck to augment his position as the bearer of 'western civilization' and its past in South Africa. What was termed as a "Festival political truce" was declared by parties in parliament and by the Torch Commando for a three week period from 29 March to 16 April 1952, so as to allow the pageantry to go ahead without the encumbrance of the 'constitutional crisis'.²⁰⁷ With politics defined in these racially exclusive terms, and it being officially declared beyond limits, the Van Riebeecks could now take the stage with more composure as and in history during the first week of April 1952.

Van Riebeeck's week of history

Moviegoers who went to their local cinemas in the week of 9 April could have seen a newsreel devoted to the beginning of the Van Riebeeck festival in Cape Town. The newsreel started its package of events with the service of "Dedication to the Soil" on the slopes of Table Mountain, which included the proclamation of Van Riebeeck Park by the mayor of Cape Town and a symbolic tree planting ceremony, introduced by D F Malan, on the metaphoric site where the "*eerste beskawing saaitjie geplant word*" [first seeds of civilisation were planted]. The scene then shifted from the newly proclaimed Van Riebeeck Park, where low-flying aircraft skimmed across the treetops, to the festival stadium on the foreshore to welcome the mail coaches from the various parts of the country at the end of their journeys across the land. There the mail coaches did their last lap around the track, after which a series of dances was performed evoking "*die eerste romantiese dae aan Kaap Die Goeie Hoop, hier waar die beskawings bron sy speerpunte ver uitgeskiet het*" [the first romantic days at the

²⁰⁶*Cape Times*, 5 April 1952.

²⁰⁷*Cape Argus*, 29 March 1952.

Cape of Good Hope, here where the source of civilisation shot out the tips of its spears far and wide].²⁰⁸

What the moviegoers did not see (as it was ignored by the newsreels) were the pageants on the special "day for Malay and Coloured communities", Wednesday 2 April. These events very nearly had to be abandoned because of the massive boycott of the festival by the people whom the organisers had termed 'non-European'. The planned 'Bantoe fees' in Langa never took place, many of the participants of the Malay pageant withdrew and the organisers had a great deal of difficulty finding a group of coloureds to render some items.²⁰⁹ Ultimately I D du Plessis managed to scrape together some people under the ethnic classifications of Malay and Griqua to perform in a pageant consisting of selected events and personalities in their alleged histories.

The Griqua pageant, which was got together rather hastily, was built around the Griqua as a distinct, separate racial entity, striving for its own national identity. Nine events, beginning with the first Outeniqua contact with Van Riebeeck, depicted the growth of the Griqua 'volkie' [little volk] under the leadership of the Kok and Le Fleur families. This 'growth' was mainly about movement of the Griqua to various parts of the country, culminating in "The founding of Kokstad" and the "The Griquas under their leaders, Andrew, Abraham and Stockenstroom le Fleur". Accompanying the pageant was a choir who rendered a regular 'praise to the lord' in the Dutch Reformed Church and called it their "*volkslied*" [national anthem], "*God, Ewig Groot en Goed*" [God, Forever Great and Kind]. The Griqua who were interviewed on radio after the pageant said that their participation in these events had already been prophesied in 1927, to show the world their *volk*, their origins, their racial phenotype and their ambition for a homeland. Trying very earnestly to show that the Griqua were not insignificant the interviewer remarked that, judging from the 500 participants who had been gathered from all corners of South Africa, he had never imagined that there were so many

²⁰⁸NFA, *Ons Nuus*, no 38, 9 April 1952.

²⁰⁹For an account of the boycott of the festival see chapter 3.

Griqua in the country. The interviewee could not but agree. They were even "*Baie groter as wat ek gedink het*" [Many more than I thought], he replied.²¹⁰

The Malay pageant, as scripted and commentated by Du Plessis in the festival stadium, combined selected snapshots of history with caricatures of contemporary culture. The "great legend" of the 'Malay nation', Sheik Yusuf ('Joseph'), stepped ashore, a group of political exiles to "form the nucleus of the Malay craftsmen of the Cape" arrived, the Malay Corps participated in the Battle of Blaauwberg in 1806 and later in a battle on the eastern frontier. Once the history of the Malay had been dealt with in two episodes, each respectively of founding and providing assistance to colonial forces, there were snippets of Malay 'culture', ranging from the 'lingo dance', Malays in sport, and trade displays to a Malay fisherman and fishsellers. As in the exhibition at the Castle, the essence of the Malay, conveyed in the floats of Sheik Yusuf and his followers, was one of "colour and beauty and fine craftsmanship" derived from Du Plessis and his racial classification of a people with "slim, and delicate hands".²¹¹

It is apparent that these Malay and Griqua pasts and cultures were not given much prominence in the context of the festival and little attention was devoted to staging these productions. Almost apologetically, I D du Plessis claimed that the intention was not to create a finely tuned, faultless presentation but rather to evoke the pleasurable warmth of "*n regtige lekker skoolkonsert*" [a really enjoyable school concert].²¹² The praise in the English and Afrikaans press for these simple, amateurish depictions followed the same lines. "The infectious gaiety of the Cape non-Europeans in a carnival mood swept through the audience, " wrote the *Cape Times* reporter. An overseas visitor was quoted as saying "This is the first time I have really felt the Festival atmosphere".²¹³ *Die Burger's* daily reporter at the festival felt that a

²¹⁰*The Festival in Pictures*, pp.38-9; *Official Festival Programme*, pp.76-7; *Die Burger*, 3 April 1952, 10 April 1952; *Cape Times*, 3 April 1952; 'Opnames van die Griekwas by die Van Riebeeckfees', 2 April 1952, SABC, 18/88-91.

²¹¹*The Festival in Pictures*, pp.38-9; *Official Festival Programme*, pp.76-7; *Die Burger*, 3 April 1952; M Masson, 'Festival "Merry Go-Round"', *Cape Times*, 20 March 1952.

²¹²*Die Burger*, 3 April 1952.

²¹³*Cape Times*, 3 April 1952.

professional production could not hold up a light to this sort of concert, which even children enjoyed. All those who were not present (and there were many) had missed one of the most beautiful and major events at the festival, the reporter claimed.²¹⁴ Yet, clearly they had not. What they had missed was an almost pathetic performance in the pouring rain for the sake of Van Riebeeck and his "*blank[e] bewonder[aars]*" [white admirers] in order to show that there were some 'non-Europeans' who were well-disposed towards them and their apartheid policies. With the boycott of the festival being so successful the "*deursettingsvermoe*" [perseverance] of the Malay and Griqua participants enabled the sparse, largely white, crowd to reflect that they and Van Riebeeck had accomplished one of the "*grootste en waardevolste*" [greatest and most worthwhile] moments in "*kleurbetrekkinge*" [coloured relations].²¹⁵

These pageants of colour (but not race, in the festival's terms) primarily conveyed a message of separate groups, with their own traditions and proto-histories. Du Plessis reminded audiences that the Griqua and Malay had "specific needs" related to their ethnic identities.²¹⁶ *Die Burger* remarked that the pageant showed how trekking and craftsmanship had become almost an innate part of the Griqua and Malay respectively. It suggested that each should acquire their own land to perpetuate their own genetic pool. The values of "*tradisievastheid*" [commitment to tradition], "*suiwer bloed*" [pure blood], and "*eiendomlikheid*" [ownness] would become anchors of a future "*gesamentlik*" [united] South Africa, advanced by a possible territorial division.²¹⁷ By separating the country into separate racial pockets, Van Riebeeck, on the eve of his people's pageant the following day, could assert with some measure of confidence that his national festival was being organised "*deur blankes vir blankes*" [by whites for whites] in order to tell, first and foremost, a story of "*blanke prestasies*" [white achievements].²¹⁸

²¹⁴*Die Burger*, 3 April 1952.

²¹⁵*Die Burger*, 10 April 1952.

²¹⁶*Cape Times*, 3 April 1952.

²¹⁷*Die Burger*, 3 and 10 April 1952.

²¹⁸*Die Burger*, 10 April 1952.

While the festival events were already underway in Cape Town, the final touches were given to the historical creations for the pageant of the past at Wingfield airport, which became "a nation's historical workshop".²¹⁹ After all the problems associated with devising the script, this part of the operations was proceeding very smoothly. In the evening, as the Malay and Griqua pageant was winding down, and as the floats made their way from Wingfield to the stadium, to prepare for the following day's procession in the streets of Cape Town, a major and unforeseen difficulty emerged. A huge storm broke out, the rain came down in buckets, and, after it abated, a ferocious wind continued. Anna Neethling-Pohl was in a quandary: "*ek het gewonder wat en hoe daar gered sou word... . Ek het 'n vreemde voorgevoel gehad dat ons mooi weer op die optogdae sou hê, maar daardie storm was vir my 'n miserable teleurstelling*" [I wondered what could be saved and how I had a strange feeling beforehand that we were going to have good weather on the days of the pageant, but that storm was a miserable disappointment for me].²²⁰ With the leaders of the various floats and the press gathered around, she decided to take a chance and issued a statement that the procession would go ahead, "*al giet die reën en al is daar geen toeskouer in die stadion nie. Ons het te ver gekom, te hard gewerk, om nou die end uit vol te hou nie*" [even if it pours with rain and there are no spectators in the stadium. We have come too far, worked too hard to not keep on going to the end].²²¹ In the early hours of the morning, floats were repaired with each helping the other out. Later, Neethling-Pohl would report that this was for her the highlight of her experience as pageant mistress. "*[E]k het nog nooit in ons land so 'n kooperasie, so 'n wonderlike saamhorigheid gesien nie*" [I have never before seen such co-operation and wonderful togetherness in our country], she wrote to the pageant committee. "*Ek het nog nooit so 'n spontane, gedetermineerde, met-humor-deurspekte optrede beleef nie*" [I have never experienced such a spontaneous, determined action interspersed with humour].²²²

Much to Neethling-Pohl's relief, when dawn came the skies were clear - another moment of divine intervention following on 1752, 1899 and 1910? - and the streets were rinsed after

²¹⁹ *Cape Times*, 29 March 1952.

²²⁰ 'Verslag oor die Optogte', 5 May 1952, CA, A 1657, vol 322.

²²¹ *Die Burger*, 3 April 1952.

²²² 'Verslag oor die Optogte'.

almost twenty-four hours of intermittent rain. "*Die son [was] op sy beste*" [the sun was at its best] to reveal to the public a monumental history pageant premised on white unity and supremacy: the 'People's Pageant'.²²³ The key reference points of the pageant were two floats constructed by the Speech and Drama Department at the University of Cape Town. As per the script, at the head of the procession was a float which served to justify processes of conquest and settlement in South Africa: "Africa Dark and Unknown". Masked figures, attired in black robes and shackled in chains, marched alongside the scene of a despotic figure who held them in "mental and spiritual darkness" (see illustration 5). One-and-a-half hours later, the same float reappeared but in a different guise. "Africa Awakes" contained a scene of figures dressed in white, symbolising "youth, strength and purity, the foundation on which rests the freedom of the individual and of Africa as a whole".²²⁴ In presenting a contrasting image to 'Darkest Africa', it reinforced notions of European settlement as the motor force behind a 'natural' phenomenon of historical evolution, from darkness to light, from slavery to freedom. The radio commentators enthused over the transformation:

Van 'n toestand van ... vrees, 'n tydperk het gevolg van stryd, van verandering, van inspanning, van neerlaag, van oorwinning en langsaam het daardie karakter van donker Afrika verander en daaruit ontstaan 'n nuwe nasie, met hul eie kultuurs, met hulle eie taal, met hulle eie rigting, met hul idealisme, met hul eie kuns ... [From a situation of fear, a period followed of struggle, change, tension, defeat and victory and slowly that character of darkest Africa changed and gave rise to a new nation with its own cultures, its own language, its own direction, its idealism and its own art.]²²⁵

Thus, as 'Africa Awoke', 'We Build a Nation', presented by Mrs D F Malan, the wife of the prime minister, and sponsored by the Association of Chambers of Commerce and *Die Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut* [Afrikaans Commercial Institute], appeared to bring the procession to its predetermined finale. This float was much more than a simple horse-drawn chariot, ridden by a young boy and girl bearing the South African flag and adorned with emblems of the provinces, as had originally been envisaged. It now depicted two huge models of white horses of about three to four metres in height, "rearing their forelegs in the sky, drawing a chariot, guided by a white clad youth [a Springbok rugby player] with a young girl holding

²²³ *Die Burger*, 5 April 1952; *Official Festival Programme*, p.79.

²²⁴ *Official Festival Programme*, pp.100, 123.

²²⁵ 'Volksoptog', 3 April 1952, SABC, 20/14/52.

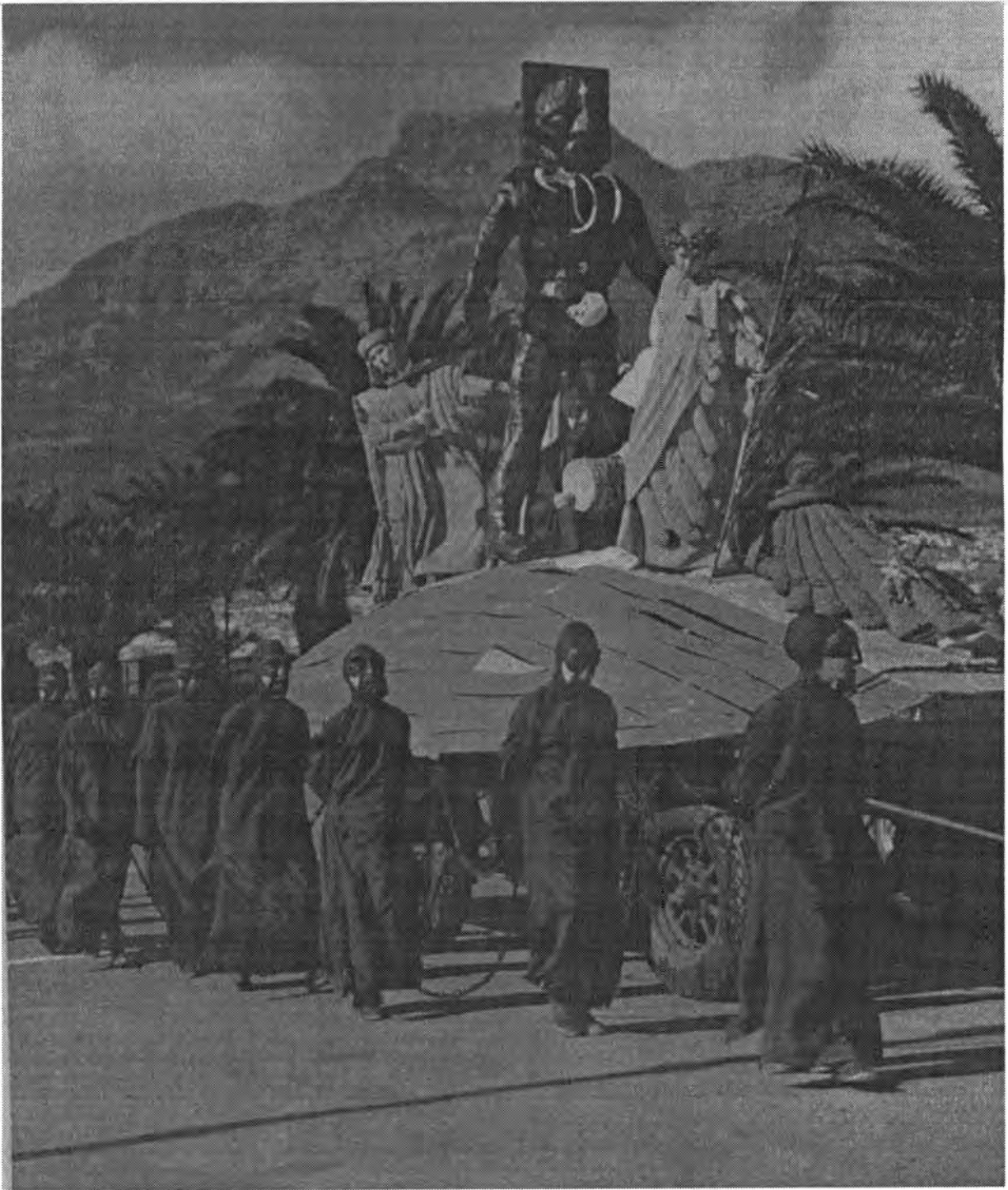


Figure 5: "Darkest Africa", presented by the Speech Training and Drama Department, University of Cape Town, at the People's Pageant, 3 April 1952, Cape Times, *The Festival in Pictures*, p.23.

the Union flag beside him". This was intended to symbolise the "courage, faith and strength" with which "the young South African nation enters the future" (see illustration 6). South African history was thus cast as a progression away from darkness and towards "European civilisation", the seeds of which had been "planted three hundred years ago" when Van Riebeeck landed at Table Bay.²²⁶

The intervening floats traced moments in this "history of enlightenment", as the nation came into being based on the co-operation of ruling classes, in a history that had been negotiated so as to be largely devoid of conflict. Although there were still some scenes depicting an Afrikaner past as a "struggle for personal liberty" - included in this section was the revolt of the burgher farmers against the Dutch East India Company - the Boer war had been sanitised, Thompson presented Uys with a bible on the outskirts of Grahamstown and the last Transvaal president, Paul Kruger, followed shortly after a float depicting the man who had been instrumental in a bid to overthrow his government in the 1890s, Cecil John Rhodes. But "The Legacy of Rhodes" made no mention of his "ridiculous, ... childish farcical" attempted coup d'état. For the pageant committee, the legacy of Rhodes, who in his day had praised and monumentalised Van Riebeeck, consisted of his "influence on education, agriculture, transport and native welfare". Although Rhodes was not exalted and placed on the same level as Van Riebeeck, as the writer Sarah Gertrude Millin had hoped that he would be (as she expressed in an article in the Anglo-American Corporation's journal, *Optima*), he became, alongside Kruger, part of 300 years of a South African past, proudly proclaimed as an "apostle of Apartheid - the separation, the apartness, of black from white".²²⁷

The nation depicted in the pageant was founded by the efforts of all settler communities. The Dutch, the English, the French, and even the Scots and the Germans contributed to this nation, in processes ranging from *volksplanting* to the mineral revolution. The uitlanders who arrived in the 1880s and '90s contributed most to the development of mining, transforming the Transvaal "into one of the richest territories in the world". Although this had brought with it

²²⁶*Official Festival Programme*, pp.122-3; *Cape Times*, 4 April 1952.

²²⁷*Official Festival Programme*, pp.105-121; Sarah Gertrude Millin, 'Pioneers in Africa - Van Riebeeck and Rhodes', *Optima*, vol 2, no 1 (March 1952), p.28.

"some difficult problems" (this was clearly a deliberately understated reference to the Anglo-Boer War), the central theme of the pageant asserted the development of settler co-operation in the founding of Van Riebeeck's South African nation.²²⁸

This was further highlighted on 3 April when, to bring the proceedings to an appropriate end, a programme of *volkspele* was included in the festival items for the evening. *Volkspele* are a type of dancing that loosely incorporates elements of waltzing, acrobatics and concepts derived from Swedish attempts to arouse a cultural nationalism, in a form that evoked the 'spontaneity' of children's Afrikaans songs and games. These *volkspele* had been closely associated with the emergence of a more virulent form of Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s and '40s. They had been co-ordinated, formalised and standardised after the 1938 trek by the *Reddingsdaadbond* [Rescue Action Fund], a body which presented itself as being concerned with promoting the economic interests of Afrikaners. Clearly the need to sustain the concept of an Afrikaner *volk* was crucial to its claim of a singular economic need with which all classes could identify, and indeed would subvert any consciousness of a class identity, which was increasingly being associated by the Bond and its allies as 'false' or 'foreign'. Under the auspices of the Bond, and later the FAK, a *Uniale Raad vir Volksang en Volkspele* [Union Council for Folk Songs and Dances] was established to set up branches and run courses for *volkspele*. Chaired by the Director of Education in the Orange Free State, who from 1948 was head of the controlling board of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Samuel Henri Pellissier, the objective of the *Uniale Raad* was to foster Afrikaner nationalism, by "*vurige vaderlandsliefde rondom eie volksgevoel deur middel van 'n singende, spelende volk by die Afrikanerjeug te kweek*" [cultivating a fiery love of the fatherland among the Afrikaner youth based on national feeling through a singing, playing volk].²²⁹ From the mid-1940s these *volkspele* were transformed into mass displays at a series of annual Jacaranda festivals held in Pretoria. According to McClintock, these sort of displays, with their attempts to create an illusion of collective identity through the political staging of a vicarious spectacle, drew their inspiration from the choreographed cultural productions of the Nuremburg rallies of Nazi

²²⁸ *Official Festival Programme*, pp.116-7.

²²⁹ R. Searle, 'Lewenskets Van Mevrouw Cecile De Ridder, Leidster van Suid-Afrikaanse Volkspele', *Pretoriana*, 103 (July 1993), p.3.



Figure 6: "We Build a Nation", presented by Mrs D F Malan, enters the festival stadium, 3 April 1952, Cape Times, *The Festival in Pictures*, p.23.

Germany.²³⁰ Over 1 000 *volkspelers* from branches throughout the Transvaal gathered together at the Caledonian Stadium, singing together and dancing rhythmically in a mass demonstration which culminated in a scene in which they formed the wheel of an ox-wagon. By 1949 such a high degree of uniformity had been achieved among these 'spontaneous' *volkspelers* from all over southern Africa, that only one practice was necessary for the mass demonstration at the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument. Wearing different colours to represent the four provinces - green for the Transvaal, blue for the Cape, orange for the Free State and white for Natal - the *volkspelers* danced for two hours in 5 large circles and then came together to form an entire ox-wagon with moving parts.²³¹ The newspaper, *Die Volksblad*, enthused over the performance, claiming that it had emerged from a "*geheimsinnige saamstelling van sentiment, tradisie en grasia*" [secret coming together of sentiment, tradition and grace].²³² It overlooked how, over the last ten years, the *Uniale Raad* had systematised, organised and choreographed *volkspele* to build upon the scaffolding established by the 'spirit of '38'.

Central to the organisation of *volkspele* was Cecile de Ridder, a classical dancer who took classes in rhythmic movement and was instrumental in setting up groupings of *volkspelers* throughout the country. She had collected and published volumes of *volkspele* with accompanying music and designed the tableaux at the Jacaranda festivals and the inauguration of the Voortrekker monument.²³³ Once Anna Neethling-Pohl had completed her pageantry for the day, Cecile de Ridder took over the evening's proceedings at the Van Riebeeck festival. But this time the *volkspele* had to take on a new meaning. More than representing an Afrikaner 'tradition', they now had to incorporate a programme of folk dancing by groups who were designated as the founder nations. First to perform were folkdancers from Holland, France, England and Scotland. The latter, through their "Country Dances" and "Highland Dancing" to the accompaniment of the Cape Town Caledonian Society Pipe Band, now

²³⁰McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p.373.

²³¹Searle, 'Lewenskets Van Mevrouw Cecile De Ridder', pp.27-31; *Cape Times*, 15 December 1949.

²³²*Die Volksblad*, 15 December 1949.

²³³Searle, 'Lewenskets Van Mevrouw Cecile De Ridder'; Interview with Cecile de Ridder, Pretoria, 10 December 1993.

became a separate founder nation. After they had finished their routines, 3 000 *volkspelers* entered the stadium, and divided into 27 groups, together forming "*een wemelde massa ... in all hulle kleure*" [one moving mass in all their colours]. As the radio commentator attempted to describe the scene to listeners, the crowd of about 30 000 joined in the singing of songs. "*U moet dit sien om dit te glo,*" [You must see it to believe it] he claimed excitedly. Then the *volkspelers* and the folkdancers joined together to form a map of South Africa with its provincial boundaries. The commentator was at a loss for words: "*Dit is onbeskryflik, dames en here.*" [It is indescribable, ladies and gentleman]. The dancers had all come together in a joint tableau, outlined and taken possession of the geographical boundaries of 'their country' and had established "*eenheid met die skare*" [unity with the crowds] in a scene that was regarded as the first of its kind. This merger was not only a signifier of co-operation in creating a past, but of the crowds, participants and radio listeners making history as well. They were becoming Van Riebeecks in their own right and founding for a future in what the commentators and organisers of the festival hoped would forever be a "bastion of the White races at earth's extremist end".²³⁴

"*Ek Land Saam met Van Riebeeck*" [I Land Together with Van Riebeeck]²³⁵

Jan and Maria van Riebeeck, of course, were also given a separate ceremony in order to accord them a place of prominence in the founding of the white nation. While there were five floats in the 'peoples pageant' depicting their arrival and early days of settlement, their landing was dramatised on its own on Saturday 5 April. With the way safely negotiated over the past year and the beach cleared of all its rubble, there were few problems encountered with the landing. Although there might have been some difficulties with the swell as they had to go in stern first for visibility's sake, instead of facing the sea and pulling in to the shore, the water was calm, making the manoeuvre relatively simple. The only problem was with

²³⁴'Volksdanse van die stamlande', 3 April 1952, SABC, 20/7-8(52): 'Massa vertoning van Volkspele', 3 April 1952, SABC, 19/51-2(52); *Official Festival Programme*, pp.84-5; Wilson, *They Founded For the Future*, p.13.

²³⁵*Die Burger*, 7 April 1952.

Maria, for whom it was the first time at sea, and who was sick on board the Dromedaris.²³⁶ Yet Frances Holland was determined to carry on and was brought ashore to accompany Jan on the sands of Granger Bay. As they stood on the beach together with their son Lambertus and a group of students from the University of Stellenbosch who as acted soldiers, they were no longer merely *volksplanters*, the originators of colonialism or the bearers of Christianity. As a family they were set to take up residence in the Castle of Good Hope as the founders of a European settler nation and, according to *Die Transvaler*, the initiators of the government's policy of apartheid.²³⁷

The apparent ease with which the landing took place, the huge crowds that gazed at the pageantry on this and the preceding days and the way the events proceeded almost without a hitch formed the basis for an enthusiastic response. The English and Afrikaans press were overflowing with effusiveness for the festival, in general, and the pageant of the past, in particular. Drawing on the conceptualisation of the festival as the celebration of a national past, there was a great deal of agreement with the claim that Van Riebeeck had managed to overcome sectionalism among South Africans who could now identify themselves as Europeans.²³⁸ Anna Neethling-Pohl was even more ebullient, asserting that she knew, from her experience of working on the pageant, that the South African nation existed and that it was united. This unity for her was almost metaphysical: "*Daar was 'n gees van saamwees, bly wees om saam te wees, trots wees om deel te wees.*" [There was a spirit of being together, of joy at being together, a pride in being a part].²³⁹ More significantly this identity, united as European, and derived from the Van Riebeecks, was cast as the South African nation. It was in these terms of racial exclusivity that the festival became "truly national", a "sweeping ... example of national unity" and, according to JGN Strauss, the leader of the United Party, an exhibition of how the "greater unity" of "Afrikaans and English-speaking South Africans" was able to transcend a "serious crisis in our national life". This almost divinely ordained "greater

²³⁶Interview with Joe Almond, Fish Hoek, 23 September 1994.

²³⁷*Die Transvaler se Van Riebeeck Bylaag*, 4 April 1952.

²³⁸See for example, *Cape Times*, 4 and 15 April 1952; *Cape Argus*, 4 April 1952; *Die Burger*, 7 April 1952.

²³⁹*Verslag oor die Optogte*, 5 May 1952, CA, A 1657, vol 322.

unity" that the Van Riebeecks had brought with them in 1952 had safeguarded racial purity, guaranteed that "the White groups" had "not been overwhelmed by the native and Coloured peoples" and would ensure that they [the 'White groups'] would still be "as flourishing as ever in another 300 years".²⁴⁰

Yet the same tensions which had surfaced in the planning of the festivities had not disappeared. *Die Burger's* festival correspondent felt that the overall thematic symbolism of the festival had been lost because of the variety of events, that "national symbols", such as the anthem, "Die Stem" (the other South African anthem at the time was God Save the Queen) and the South African flag, were not evident enough, and that the float 'We Build a Nation' was lost in its position at the end of the procession. Moreover, the correspondent claimed, the crowds were by and large Afrikaans-speaking. This was attributed to white English-speakers' attitudes towards the festival having being "poisoned" by Arthur Keppel-Jones' book, *When Smuts Goes*, which presented the commemoration at the start of "his alarmist future history".²⁴¹ There was also some feeling, in the more liberal sections of the press, that the festival had possibly widened the "gulf between the White and non-European communities" and while they regarded it as unthinkable to "surrender ... White leadership in South Africa", some "fair reform" did seem necessary.²⁴² But the most substantial dissenting voice against the festival and its representations was swept under the carpet and labelled as largely insignificant. A massive 95% boycott of the festival by those who were termed non-European was conveniently ignored by a Van Riebeeck who said that from the beaches of Granger Bay he had managed to spread a message of "*welwillendheid en begrip tussen blank en nie-blank*" [good will and understanding between white and non-white].²⁴³

²⁴⁰*Cape Times*, 4 and 15 April 1952; *Cape Argus*, 7 April 1952.

²⁴¹*Die Burger*, 11 April 1952; *Cape Times*, 12 April 1952.

²⁴²*Cape Argus*, 7 April 1952.

²⁴³*Die Burger*, 10 April 1952.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTESTING VAN RIEBEECK'S NATION

At the "zero hour of our national life" as Jan, Maria and Lambertus van Riebeeck were making preparations for their landing at Granger Bay to commemorate "their three hundred years of rapine and bloodshed" and to prepare themselves for "another evil era of piracy and oppression", Silas Modiri Molema, historian and treasurer of the African National Congress (ANC), opened the twentieth annual conference of the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) by calling upon the delegates to "gird [their] loins" and brace themselves to "reverse the dismal and tragic history of past years". In the months which followed, he said, Van Riebeeck and company would feast on "our defeat" and "our tears". He urged the audience, though, not to be "carried away like chaff before the wind",

Nor hold a candle to our shame and sorrow,
Nor flatter the rank breath of white South Africa,
Nor bow our knee to their idolatries,
Nor coin our cheek to their smiles,
Nor shout in worship of their echo.¹

Molema's speech was received with acclaim by the audience and the SAIC passed a resolution to support a campaign of defiance against apartheid's 'unjust laws'. They decided to work together with the ANC to call on "hundreds of thousands to [come] to the meetings and demonstrations on April 6" and participate in the "first stage in the struggle ... for the ending of oppression".²

Just over two months later, on the eve of the beginning of the festival week in Cape Town, the day before D F Malan opened Van Riebeeck Park and the mail coaches ended their journeys at the stadium on the foreshore, about 6 000 people gathered on Cape Town's Grand Parade to declare their intention of intensifying a boycott campaign against Van Riebeeck and his festival. Adjacent to the Castle where Van Riebeeck was about to take up residence, the

¹T Karis and G Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, vol 2 , paperback edition, Stanford (1987), Document 89: "Opening Address" at Annual Conference of the South African Indian Congress, by Dr S M Molema, January 25, 1952, pp.477-8.

²Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, vol 2 , Document 91: "April 6: People's Protest Day." Flyer issued by the ANC (Transvaal) and the Transvaal Indian Congress, pp.482-3.

speakers faced the crowd from a platform adorned with an image of "the founder" turned upside down and defaced with a large X (see illustration 7). Held under the auspices of the Local Co-ordinating Committee of the Non-European Unity Movement, the meeting was addressed by many of its leading lights who spoke both of how the "*Herrenvolk*" had consistently attempted to "break the nation" and how the Unity Movement, through promoting a boycott of the festival, were in reality the true builders of the nation. Dealing with the former theme speakers, such as Hosea Jaffe, Dan Neethling and Jane Gool, drew upon historical events - the alienation of land, the disenfranchisement of "Non-Whites" and the exploitation of workers - to show how a policy of "Divide and Rule" had been used to block the 'unity of the oppressed'. Other speakers, like Ben Kies, Willie van Schoor and Isaac Tabata, used local and international examples - the way teachers were participating in the boycott of the festival and liberation movements in other parts of Africa, China and the Middle East - to illustrate how nations could be built through "great liberatory struggles". The crowd responded to their entreaties with enthusiasm and resolved to reaffirm the boycott of the festival, escalate its application over the next two weeks as the festival reached its climax and support the "the struggle to build a real nation of all South Africans, irrespective of race, colour, creed or sex".³

The seeming ease with which one can apparently move, in a narrative of 'national resistance', from the SAIC conference in Johannesburg at the end of January, which proposed to take action against Van Riebeeck, to a Unity Movement meeting at the end of March, which celebrated and further encouraged the boycott of his festival, belies much of the conflict that went into formulating responses by those individuals and organisations who were opposing the commemorative events in the streets of Cape Town and beyond in March and April 1952. In as much as the festival, which presented itself as a seamless, unbroken exhibition of past and present settler unity, was the outcome of a range of conflicts over both the appropriate form and content of its varying displays, so the pasts which contested Van Riebeeck's nation were as heavily disputed in terms of their presentation and substance. Clearly, there were different political organisations involved in opposing Van Riebeeck and many of the disagreements over the appropriate responses to the tercentenary festival were related to their

³*The Torch*, 1 April 1952; P Ntantala, *A Life's Mosaic: The Autobiography of Phyllis Ntantala*, Cape Town (1992), pp.151-2.

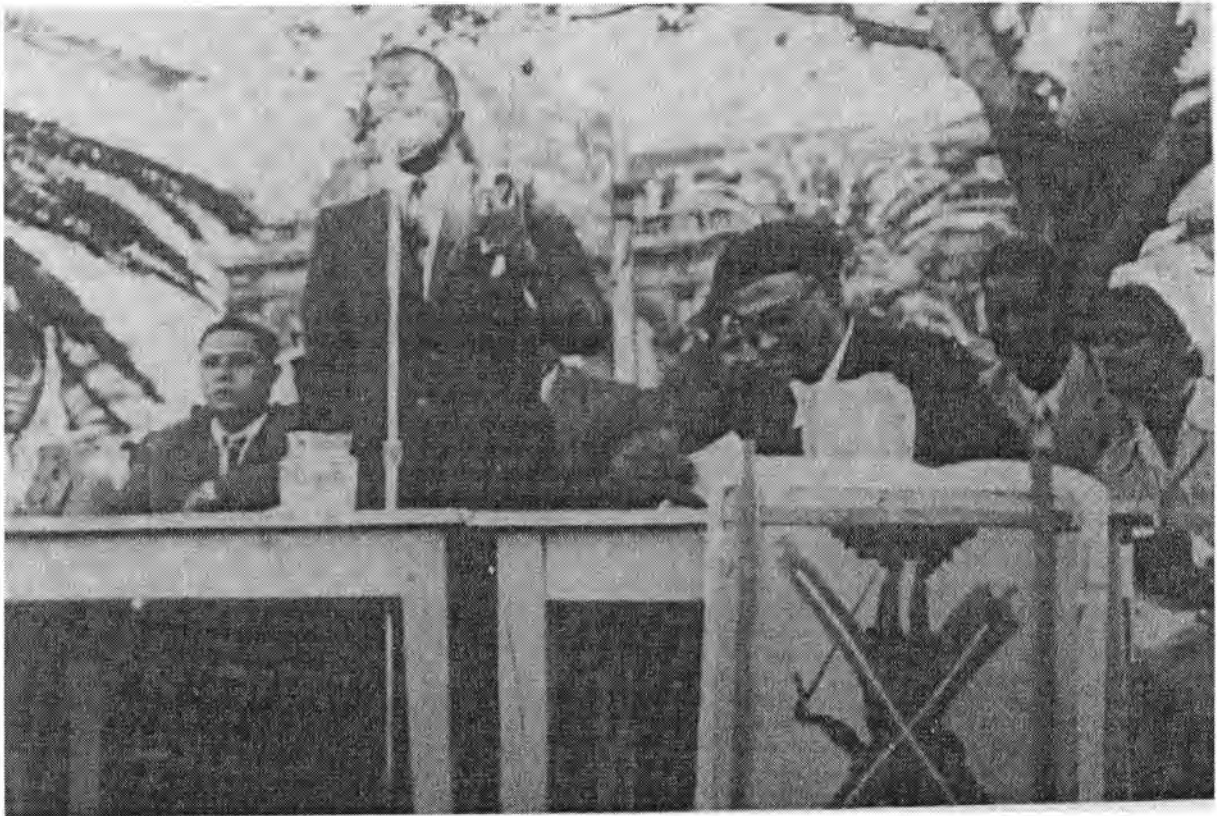


Figure 7: Anti-Van Riebeeck Festival Protest Meeting, Grand Parade, 30 March 1952. On stage, from left to right are Phyllis Jordan, Willem van Schoor, S A Jayiya, Goolam Gool, Dan Neethling and Jane Gool, P Ntantala, *A Life's Mosaic*, Cape Town (1992).

divergent objectives and strategies. Yet, while these political organisational imperatives were often crucial in demarcating the nature of the rejoinder to Van Riebeeck, the calls for a boycott of the tercentenary were, by and large, a direct response to the attempts by the organisers of the pageantry and exhibitions to incorporate specific groupings into the structures and events of the festival, particularly the separate ones set aside for 'non-Europeans'. The organisers encountered a great deal of resistance to their incorporative campaign from various sectors, structures and individuals. This chapter examines these opponents of Van Riebeeck who surfaced in the preparation for and in course of the festival. It explores the different forms they assumed as they converged with and diverged from each other in their interaction with the negotiated narratives of 'the nation' emerging from the planners of the tercentenary and the landing at Granger Bay.

Boycotting Van Riebeeck

In the latter part of 1951, as the final touches were being put to the Van Riebeeck festival programmes, the organisers of the various sub-committees which dealt with specific aspects of the proceedings set about the task of locating the thousands of participants who were required to put the show on the road. They scoured schools, universities, and youth and cultural organisations in order to fill the places. Their recruiting efforts largely paid off as hordes of white school children were enlisted to scuffle "through the dust, bellowing a song of white ascendancy". Carmel Schrire, who participated in the Parade of Youth on 1 April as part of the delegation from the Good Hope Seminary, recalls that the words of one of the songs they had to sing started off very softly, asking if you could hear the mighty drone over the veld as the nation awoke.⁴ Gradually, the tempo and sound increased, "*van Kaapland tot bo in die Noorde*" [from the Cape to the far North] until the massed choirs reached a crescendo:

*Die stryd wat ons vaders begin het,
sal woed tot ons sterf of gewin het:
Dit is die Eed van Jong Suid-Afrika.
The struggle that our fathers began,*

⁴C Schrire, *Digging Through Darkness: Chronicles of an Archaeologist*, Johannesburg (1995), p.32.

shall continue until we die or we have won:
This is the Oath of Young South Africa.⁵

Although the primary purpose of the festival revolved around establishing a sense of this European-derived settler unity, and thus constructing a white racial 'national' identity, the organisers were also concerned with promoting 'non-European' identities in bounded ethnic (or proto-ethnic) categories which would be beholden to the 'European race'. This was a key feature of emerging apartheid policy in the early 1950s, where the extension and maintenance of white rule was no longer conceived of merely in terms of exercising racial control over the majority of the population, but involved splitting "the majority into compartmentalized minorities". To make these "ethnic minorities" into "believable" and durable entities, they had to be constructed in terms of selected and featured aspects of "historical and cultural experience".⁶ As was seen in chapter two, these 'experiences' were promoted in the festival through the planned separate events and displays that were set aside for those who were demarcated as not constituting part of Van Riebeeck's nation. There was to be a "day for the Malay and Coloured Communities", a village at the festival fair to be "inhabited by tribal natives", and a "*Bantoe-fees*" [festival for the Bantu] in Langa township involving sports, choral singing and the slaughtering of animals, as well as special "cheap days" to enable coloured teachers and students to swell the numbers at the festival fair. But, unlike the masses of white school children who participated in the mass displays, finding ready groups who could join in these separate activities proved to be much more difficult. Many of those whom the festival organisers specified as 'non-European' decided that they would not partake of the segregated and rather measly offerings of Van Riebeeck's "Jong Suid-Afrika". Eighteen hours after the "Youth of South Africa" had delivered their message and rendered their oath to the crowds that had amassed, Adam Kok, Sheik Yusuf, Stockenstroom le Fleur and the Moslem Lads' Brigade performed their "special pageant" on a rainy autumn day in Cape Town, in a lonely and deserted stadium, to a handful of spectators (see illustration 8).⁷

⁵*Official Festival Programme*, p.75.

⁶M Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Cape Town (1996), p.96.

⁷*The Festival in Pictures*, pp.38-9; *Official Festival Programme*, pp.76-7; *Die Burger*, 3 and 4 April 1952; *Cape Times*, 3 April 1952. The different 'ethnic' events that were designed for the festival fair are elaborated upon in chapters two and four.



Figure 8: The Landing of Sheik Yusuf at the Festival Stadium, 2 April 1952, Cape Times, *The Festival in Pictures*, p.45.

This bizarre, farcical and at the same time almost eerie event in the midst of all the revelry and drama that the festival was producing, had been shaped the previous year when the organisers had approached coloured school principals in the Cape peninsula to bring their pupils to the envisaged festival fair. This fair was a mammoth and enormously expensive undertaking and from the outset it was realised that the only way that some of the costs could be recouped was if 'non-Europeans' attended.⁸ Moreover, coloureds attending the fair would be confronted with displays which clearly showed whites as pre-ordained bearers of experience, civilisation and ability and would thereby re-establish an affiliation of "*dankbaarheid*" [thankfulness] and congenial servitude towards whites, constructed as the good old times - before the days of "*kwaadwillige, onkundige en ondankbare agitators*" [mischievous, ignorant and unthankful agitators] - which had existed in a mythical, rural '*ou Kaap*' [old Cape].⁹ "The relationship on the farm between ourselves and those who served us could not have been happier", wrote a visitor to the "Coloured section of the exhibition at the Castle". "They were hardworking and happy folk and served us willingly and cheerfully all their working lives." By going to the festival fair, coloureds could also see "the products which were processed by their labour" and thus could re-affirm maternal ties of servitude to the "white man" in terms of "their own" possession.¹⁰ This was expressed metaphorically through the festival message which the white Dutch Reformed Church wanted 'non-Europeans' to imbibe: coloureds, who belonged to the mission church, needed to place themselves so as to recognise their 'natural' position as the "*dogter[s]*" [daughters] of the "*Moeder Kerk*" [Mother Church].¹¹

If the principals of coloured schools could be persuaded or cajoled into bringing along groups of pupils to the fair grounds, it would both solve the numbers problem and relay this festival message from 'mother' to 'child'. The latter metaphor was appropriate for promoters of the

⁸See chapter four for a discussion of the fair, the costs involved and the expectations relating to the size of crowds.

⁹Dutch Reformed Church, *Die Koms van Jan van Riebeeck: Ramp of Redding?*, Cape Town (1952), pp.5-6.

¹⁰J P Duminy, *Twilight over the Tygerberg*, Cape Town (1979), pp.108-9; *Cape Times*, 15 March 1952.

¹¹Dutch Reformed Church, '*Die Koms van Jan van Riebeeck*', p.7.

festival as they regarded young people as malleable entities whose minds needed to be shaped.¹² To facilitate the participation of 'youth' in both racial and generational terms, the festival was publicised by asking schools to sell, for nine pence, a medallion made of cupro-nickel, which depicted Van Riebeeck in an imperial pose, flanked by a boy who was about to place a wreath on his head and a girl holding a palm leaf.¹³ For the organisers, these attempts at popularising an image of Van Riebeeck, in anticipation of participation in the festival programme, floundered as not only were pupils unable to afford purchasing what was regarded as a non-essential item, but also because the scheme encountered a grouping of teachers, organised in an articulate, vociferous constituency, who were vehemently opposed to the festival and its racially exclusive nationing. The Athlone Principals' Association, with representation from "23 non-European schools having a total of 10,500 pupils" in the Cape peninsula, decided that it would not take the children whom they taught to the celebrations which were "glorify[ing] white domination", exhorted parents not to buy the "badges of shame" and announced to D F Malan that he could go about building his nation without them.¹⁴

These principals from Athlone were aligned to the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA), an organisation that in the early 1940s had become a political battleground for groupings that coalesced around the issue of participation in a government-established separate advisory board for coloureds which carried the title of the Coloured Advisory Council. In 1944 the Anti-CAD (Coloured Affairs Department) faction of the TLSA, which was dominated by a radical, largely university trained, intelligentsia, defeated the more conservative faction, led by G Golding, who advocated taking part in government structures in order to preserve a racially designated coloured identity and sectional interests, and assumed control of the organisation and its official mouthpiece, *The Educational Journal*. Golding left the TLSA, formed the Teachers Educational and Professional Association (TEPA) and the Coloured People's National Union (CPNU), rejected black unity as he claimed that coloureds had a

¹²*Cape Times*, 2 April 1952.

¹³Director, South African Mint, to Secretary for Education, Arts and Sciences, 27 August 1951, CAD, UOD 2229, Part 5, vol E 357/11.

¹⁴*Cape Argus*, 12 September 1951; *Port Elizabeth Evening Post*, 12 September 1951; *The Torch*, 18 September 1951; *The Star*, 11 September 1951; For schools deciding not to accept the medallions because of the costs involved, see the various letters to the Secretary of Education from school principals between July and October 1951, CAD, UOD 2229, Part 5, E357/1.

closer affinity with whites than with 'natives' and called for segregated residential areas. The newly radicalised TLSA, on the other hand, became a key player in a broad front of organisations formed in late 1943 to fight against racial domination and segregation and to reject racial identities as imposed constructs, the Non-European Unity Movement.¹⁵ Along with the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (Anti-CAD), the All African Convention (AAC), the Cape African Teachers Association (CATA) and the African Political Organisation (APO), the TLSA adhered both to the ten point programme of democratic rights that the Unity Movement advocated and to a policy of total non-collaboration with structures and institutions associated with racial segregation.¹⁶ Although issues of when, where and how boycotting should be applied were hotly debated within the Unity Movement, it tended to be advanced more in terms of a principle than a specific strategic tactic.¹⁷ Regarding boycotting government structures as "the primary weapon of struggle", it was necessary to do much more than merely to 'support' a stayaway from the Van Riebeeck festival but, rather with "enthusiasm and self-sacrifice", to "intervene and put these principles and strategies into practice".¹⁸

This enthusiasm to confront Van Riebeeck by the broad front of organisations associated with Unity Movement was also directly related to its continual use of history-as-lesson to effect its ten point programme and the strategy of non-collaboration. "The liberatory movement", wrote a reviewer in the Unity Movement's newspaper, *The Torch*,

¹⁵G Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, Cape Town (1987), ch.8, gives an extensive account of the events leading to the radicalisation of the TLSA and the emergence of the Unity Movement. On the principles of the Unity Movement see B Nasson, 'The Unity Movement Tradition: Its Legacy in Historical Consciousness' in J Brown et al (eds), *History from South Africa*, Philadelphia (1991), pp.147-8.

¹⁶The ten point programme called for a full franchise for all, free and equal education, freedom of speech, freedom of movement, complete equality for all, inviolability of person, and a revision of the land question, the civil code, taxation and labour legislation in accordance with these rights. C Rassool, 'Going Back to Our Roots: Aspects of Marxist and Radical Thought and Politics in South Africa, 1930-1960', unpublished MA thesis, Northwestern University (1987), p.16; Lewis, *Between The Wire and The Wall*, p.221; C Rassool and L Witz, 'The 1952 Jan van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival: Constructing and Contesting Public National History in South Africa', *Journal of African History*, 34 (1993), p.460.

¹⁷N Alexander, 'Non-collaboration in the Western Cape, 1943-1963', in W James and M Simons (eds), *The Angry Divide*, Cape Town (1989), pp.184-6.

¹⁸*The Guardian*, 10 April 1952; Rassool and Witz, 'Constructing and Contesting', p.460. After the Van Riebeeck festival it was planned to extend the boycott to the segregated stands at Newlands rugby ground. *Eastern Province Herald*, 31 March 1952.

must be built upon a scientific analysis and understanding, upon the hard-learned lessons of the past, upon principles, and carried forward consciously by our practical work based on theories derived from that historical understanding. A proper history is a useful weapon in this whole process of emancipation.¹⁹

When W P van Schoor delivered the TLSA memorial lecture in 1950 entitled "The Origin and Development of Segregation in South Africa", his aim was to show that history was an absolutely necessary signpost towards achieving liberation. "A people desiring to emancipate itself", he asserted, "must understand the process of its enslavement".²⁰ There were differences within the Unity Movement about what these historical processes entailed but they tended to revolve around colonial dispossession, the almost inevitable bankruptcy of those who collaborated, heroes of resistance and the artificial imposition of racial categories. Some of these aspects were evident in 'A History of Despotism: The Why and Wherefore of South African History' by Nxele, which had been running in *The Torch* since 1949. Van Riebeeck was referred to as a "frustrated imperialist" who "fought the indigenous people for land and slave labour", the "Hottentots" were stubborn resisters "fighting against foreign conquest" and the racial category 'white' was one by which "the slave-owner and governing group from Holland, from Europe, with the pink-yellow-blotchy colour" "miraculously" came to be known.²¹

So prepared were the TLSA for the coming of Van Riebeeck that, very soon after the announcement by the government in April 1950 that it planned to stage a tercentenary festival, branches were canvassed on what action to take. According to *The Educational Journal*, as a result of the feedback received, the executive of the TLSA passed a resolution in October 1950, well before any plans were in place to create separate events for coloureds, opposing the festival, dissociated themselves from its proceedings and urged branches to engage in history lessons, "enlightening members and the public on the historical facts concerning the arrival of Van Riebeeck and the reasons for the present celebrations".²² This might be a highly

¹⁹*The Torch*, 29 April 1952.

²⁰Quoted in Rassool, 'Going Back to Our Roots', p.29.

²¹*The Torch*, 9, 16 and 23 January 1950.

²²Quoted in *The Educational Journal*, XIII, 6 (March 1952).

idealised depiction of how the decision was arrived at, but it does indicate that there was a keen interest in TLSA circles (particularly among the leadership) in mobilising against a festival which promoted a racially exclusive nationalism, utilised history for that purpose and was "trying to inflict" that history "on the oppressed".²³

The Educational Journal, in line with the TLSA resolution taken in October 1950, ran a monthly 'Van Riebeeck Series' in the first half of 1951, to provide the "full facts" on the events leading to the landing in 1652 and its immediate aftermath. These presented 'facts' were explicitly directed against the festival and its central icon, to enable teachers to engage in what was termed a "critical discussion and revaluation" of "the subject of the *Herrenvolk's* Tercentenary Celebration". What is eminently notable about these articles - 'Forgotten Past' by David Stuurman, '"Gold, Gospel and Glory"' by John Parish and 'The Settlement: Reasons and Consequences' by Harold Kapman - is their presentation of the past in an almost academic discourse, providing references, a bibliography and a contextualisation of events in a framework of African history, political and economic transformation in Europe and the expansion of trading operations in the East Indies. It was the authority and seriousness of these articles, together with their presentation of a selected, partial past as completely open to interpretation and critical discussion, that was to form the basis of persuading teachers that depictions of the arrival of Van Riebeeck as a "white man's duty" or a "civilising mission" were "rationalisations and untruths" to justify "the present state of affairs".²⁴

When the 25 Athlone Principals announced that they would be discouraging their pupils from participation in the festival in any form, they received the full backing of the TLSA. At the Regional Conference of the South Western Districts Branch of the League, held in the small southern Cape town of Oudtshoorn, the executive of the TLSA issued a statement that teachers should not permit their pupils to buy the Van Riebeeck medallions and to work, instead, towards organising a boycott of the celebrations which would "glorify the conquest of the non-White people". Significantly, at the same time, the TLSA resolved to oppose the opening of a college for the training of coloured teachers in Oudtshoorn. The lack of study

²³Interview with G.H, a retired nurse, quoted in Nasson, 'The Unity Movement', p.160.

²⁴*The Educational Journal*, March, April, and May/June 1951.

and boarding facilities in the proposed college, the plan to lower entrance qualifications for women, the structural nature of the buildings - "prefabricated hutments" - and its location, far removed from major urban areas, were cited as reasons for the denunciation of the project.²⁵ Such facilities and their condemnation paralleled the constant criticism by coloured teachers of a lack of wage parity between themselves and white teachers, the latter receiving far higher remuneration than their coloured counterparts. Coloured teachers therefore found that they had little enthusiasm or material incentive for celebrating the Van Riebeeck festival. Indeed, some teachers decided to reject the festival not because of a politically principled stand but because they wanted to assert an elite status as a "better type or thinking person", unlike the "coons and tribal dancers" who were "celebrating slavery" by participating in the separate events and from which "one couldn't expect anything better". Even the more conservative TEPA announced that it would not attend the festival, but at the same time it would not promote a boycott because it regarded the arrival of Van Riebeeck as an event of historical import, seeing him as "a pioneer of Western Civilization".²⁶

The ability to mobilise support against Van Riebeeck from teachers who were termed coloured was also related to the transformation of their position as a designated racial grouping in the early years of Nationalist Party rule. From 1948, trains in the Cape Peninsula were racially segregated, the ability of coloureds to move between racial groups and "pass for white" was severely curtailed by the Population Registration Act of 1950 which legislated racial categories, and the Separate Representation of Voters Bill, introduced in February 1951, intended to remove coloured voters in the Cape from the common voters roll.²⁷ The Franchise Action Council (FRAC), a very broadly based alliance linked to the ANC, but at the same time enveloping a spectrum from "left-wing trade unionists" to "accommodationist coloured politicians", was formed to lobby and co-ordinate action against the Separate Representation of Voters Bill. Included in the ranks of FRAC were representatives from the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), the Communist Party (Sam Kahn among them), the ANC and

²⁵*Oudtshoorn Courant*, 13 October 1951. See also *The Educational Journal*, October 1951, *Diamond Fields Advertiser* and *Die Vaderland*, 9 October 1951, for reports on the regional conference.

²⁶*The Torch*, 2 and 9 October 1951, 12 February 1952. For a discussion over the wage disparity between white and coloured teachers and its political ramifications see Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, pp.234-5.

²⁷Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, pp.266-7.

Golding's CPNU.²⁸ The Unity Movement saw the alliance as a sectional body which concerned itself only with defending the interests of a single racial entity, pointed to meetings where the coloured vote was defended by speakers who argued that they did not want "to be reduced to the level of the Natives" and refused to join an organisation which they claimed had not broken down the "mental barriers of segregation" by behaving, acting and thinking in terms of group interests rather than as a nation.²⁹ In spite of the fact that support from the Unity Movement was not forthcoming, FRAC went ahead with its planned programme of protests against the bill and called for a stayaway from work on 7 May 1951. The Unity Movement declared this planned action to be "adventurist and irresponsible" and wanted no part of it. The CPNU, on the other hand, which had initially welcomed the tenor of FRAC meetings where speakers had warned about the dangers of becoming "like the African people", was unwilling to confront the government head on and withdrew from FRAC.³⁰ Faced with a compelling need to publicise the planned strike, FRAC arranged a Freedom Fair at Maynardville in Wynberg which included side shows, a Malay restaurant and a performance by the government-sponsored Eoan coloured cultural group. Many of the fair goers came in fancy dress - there was a "politically conscious gingerbread man" and an "apartheid miss" - and an announcer roamed the grounds reminding people about 7 May.³¹ This pageantry, when combined with a threat to what were perceived as racially based privileges, may have played a part in contributing to the partial success of the stayaway, particularly in the western Cape, although the Unity Movement suspected that arrangements had been made privately between employers and employees that they would work on a public holiday.³²

Buoyed up by the success of what its deputy chair, Johny Gomas, referred to as bringing "the Coloured people into action as no other organisation had done in the past",³³ FRAC decided

²⁸T Lodge, *Black Politics*, p.40; Lewis, *Between The Wire and the Wall*, p.267.

²⁹Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, vol 2, Document 97: 'A Declaration to the People of South Africa from the Non-European Unity Movement.' Statement by the NEUM, April 1951, p.497.

³⁰Lewis, *Between The Wire and the Wall*, p.268; Lodge, *Black Politics*, p.40.

³¹*The Guardian*, 3 May 1951.

³²Lodge, *Black Politics*, p.40.

³³Quoted in D Musson, *Johny Gomas: Voice of the Working Class*, Cape Town (1989), p.108.

to add its voice to the growing call to boycott the Van Riebeeck celebrations. Unlike the TLSA and the Unity Movement which condemned the entire conceptualisation of organising a Van Riebeeck festival, FRAC was more concerned about the specific arrangements, how festival committees promoted racial exclusivity by having no "Non-European ... representation" and how the pageantry misrepresented South Africa's past by depicting the country's history as "of" and "for the Europeans only". Arguing that the arrival of Van Riebeeck was "an event of great historical significance", the statement issued by Gomas and E Andrews, the secretary of FRAC, declared that the opportunity should have been used "to commemorate the first beginnings of co-operation between white and black". As this very clearly was not the way that the festival had been conceptualised and planned - a "biased and one-sided political and racial spirit pervades every aspect of the tercentenary" declared FRAC - it had decided to boycott all the official commemorative events associated with the tercentenary.³⁴

The Unity Movement, which had, since 1950, been at the forefront of promoting a boycott of the festival, felt that FRAC was obfuscating the issue by dealing with the specific contents of the festival and seemingly implying that if substantial alterations were made they would encourage participation. The editor of *The Torch* wrote:

The main reasons for boycotting this orgy of *Herrenvolkism* are that the national oppression and exploitation of the Non-Whites are to be celebrated, that the triumph of the Master-Race over Kaffir, Hotnot and Coolies is to be celebrated, that another 300 years of domination are to be heralded. No matter what *form* these celebrations take, no matter how many Non-Whites are bullied or seduced or fooled into taking part, no matter how wonderful the exhibits and processions and side-shows, nothing can disguise the fact that the *Herrenvolk* is dancing and revelling upon our own enslavement. And only the slaves among us could consciously and voluntarily join them.³⁵

The approach of FRAC, which presented non-participation in terms of lack of 'non-white' representation in the events and history of the festival, would only spread "confusion and weakness" about the boycott, claimed the Unity Movement. What particularly worried the Unity Movement was that in late 1951 the organisers of the tercentenary were setting in place

³⁴*The Guardian*, 11 October 1951. See also *Die Volksblad*, 5 October 1951; *Die Burger* and *Natal Witness*, 6 October 1951.

³⁵*The Torch*, 9 October 1951.

concrete plans to incorporate specific, separate, racially determined groupings in the festival, thereby enabling "non-Europeans to have a ... share" - if not an equal one - "in the celebration of their own enslavement".³⁶

I D du Plessis, the Commissioner for Coloured Affairs, was attempting to organise Malay and coloureds participants for 'their' day at the festival. In his sights were the Cape Malay Choir Board, an organisation he had helped establish in 1939, and the Eoan group, the state-aided drama association for coloureds.³⁷ While he was having limited success with his own society, the latter was proving to be much more hesitant about partaking of Van Riebeeck's offerings. There were some members of the Eoan group who did want to participate in the events that Du Plessis was organising. Reasons for this varied from a willingness to "show how good coloureds were" to a fear that, if they did not join in, the government would withdraw its £400 a year grant to the organisation. Likewise, reasons for boycotting the festival were also varied. There were those who saw the festival as representing 300 years of discrimination and saw no reason to join in such a celebration. But there were others, who, like some of the teachers, were asserting an elite racial status as coloureds and found the idea that they would have "to dance like Zulus and 'Kaffirs'" "unthinkable". Which reason dominated in discussions is unclear, but combined they were enough for the Eoan group to decide that it would boycott I D du Plessis' Van Riebeeck celebrations.³⁸

The refusal by members of the Eoan group to dance like "Zulus and 'Kaffirs'" was a direct reference to the attempts by the organisers to involve another racially designated 'non-European' group in the festival: the 'natives' from the African township of Langa, eleven kilometres from the Cape Town city centre. Selected 'natives' from the township were required to go on display at the Native Affairs Department Exhibit at the festival fair that was being organised in Cape Town for three weeks beginning 15 March 1952. Using 'natives' from the almost 12 000 inhabitants of Langa for the display was seen as a way to cut down on the costs that might accrue if people had to be transported from other areas of the country

³⁶*The Torch*, 9 October 1951.

³⁷Jeppie, 'Historical Process and the Constitution', pp.9, 62.

³⁸*The Torch*, 9 October 1951.

and accommodated in Cape Town.³⁹ But from the outset the NAD was aware that there might be problems in acquiring the exhibitors that they required from Langa, fearing that "coloured threats to ban the Festival" might have spread to the township set aside for African residents in the Cape peninsula. Wyatt Sampson, Publicity and Liaison Officer of the NAD, who was responsible for the 'Bantu exhibit', together with S Parsons, the Native Commissioner for Salt River and Mr Rogers, the NAD's manager of Langa, convened a meeting of organisations in the department's board room in Langa on 10 September 1951 in an attempt to pre-empt a possible boycott. To the approximately 50 people in attendance they outlined plans to have a "real live African display" at the festival fair which would depict Africans prior to the arrival of Europeans (this included a "kraal" and "Native dancers" and "the best type of hut building"), through to their education under European tutelage and ending with "educated Africans on show". Claiming that this would be an opportunity for Africans to show the world that they were intelligent, Sampson urged them to co-operate with the NAD and take part in the display.⁴⁰

The response to the NAD's solicitations was not exactly what it had hoped for. Some members of the audience claimed that they had previously co-operated with the government on several projects but that thereafter "had regretted it". Others refused to commit themselves and decided to convene a meeting of those who had a stake in the issue before submitting a formal reply to the NAD. One of the issues on which those in attendance wanted clarity was the history that the festival was being based on; they appointed a special research committee, consisting of three African lecturers and teachers, "messrs A C Jordan, Siwisa and Kwebulana" to report back at the proposed meeting approximately two weeks later.⁴¹

³⁹See chapter four for the costs involved in staging the NAD display at the festival fair and details of its contents. For populations statistics of Langa in the early 1950s see R Molapo, 'Sports, Festivals and Popular Politics: Aspects of Social and Political Culture in Langa Township, 1945-70', unpublished MA thesis, University of Cape Town (1994), p.6; M Musemwa, 'Aspects of Social and Political History of Langa Township', Cape Town, 1927-1948', unpublished MA thesis, University of Cape Town (1993), pp.29-30.

⁴⁰Native Affairs Department Memo, circa 9 October 1951, 'NAD Exhibition on Van Riebeeck Festival Fair', CAD, NTS 987/400; *Diocesan College Magazine*, xxxvii, i (March 1952); *The Guardian*, 27 September 1951.

⁴¹'NAD Exhibition on Van Riebeeck Festival Fair', CAD, NTS 987/400; *The Guardian*, 27 September 1951; *The Torch*, 9 October 1951.

The less than lukewarm response that the NAD officials encountered was indicative of the lack of enthusiasm among the 'natives' in Langa towards the festival. What was jarring were the plans to present Africans in a 'tribal' environment which portrayed the pre-modern life of people prior to European 'civilisation' as natural. The notion of innate underdevelopment was particularly insulting to those living in Langa who felt that they had moved far beyond the 'tribal state'. Indeed, according to Musemwa, by the 1940s many of the inhabitants of Langa saw themselves as permanent residents of the city living in a European style community. They were increasingly intolerant of those who lived in rural areas, refused to marry people from the countryside whom they regarded as primitive and unsophisticated and had established their own commemorations which marked the conversion of Xhosa speaking people to Christianity and the 'dawn' of education as pivotal moments in their lives.⁴² It was particularly African teachers in Langa who could not brook the idea of going on display. When I D Mkhize, the principal of Langa High School, circularised members of the Western Province Bantu Teachers League (WPBTL) to indicate the ways in which they could contribute to the Van Riebeeck festival, he received an angry rebuttal. The members of the WPBTL replied that they would not wear "*amabeshu*" (loin-clothes) and "teach Mpondo-Tswana-Zulu dances in tribal schools" at the festival. As an educated elite, they felt particularly insulted as being regarded as an easily malleable, "unthinking crowd".⁴³

The meeting to decide upon a response to the NAD was held at the Market Hall, Langa, on 27 September 1951. In attendance was a range of groupings, some of which had often been at loggerheads with each other. Included among them were representatives of the Rugby Football Union, the Traders' Association, the Society of Young Africa, the Cape African Teachers Association, the National Council of African Women, the Langa Vigilance Association and the local ANC branch. The presence of the last mentioned alongside groupings which were aligned to the Unity Movement was particularly notable as they had fallen out in the past on the issue of how to engage with government structures. Unlike the Unity Movement, the ANC and its allies, at times, tended to encourage individuals to

⁴²Musemwa, 'History of Langa Township', pp.133-142.

⁴³Reply to I D Mkhize's circular letter by teachers belonging to the WPBTL, n.d, quoted in Molapo, 'Sports, Festivals and Popular Politics', pp.128-9.

participate on certain racially-based government bodies, such as the Native Representatives Council and the Locations Advisory Boards, and advocated using the boycott only as "a tactic in the struggle". One of the ANC's associates, the Communist Party's Sam Kahn, who was a "Native Representative" in Parliament, later accused the Unity Movement of turning non-collaboration into a "shibboleth or fetish".⁴⁴ Yet, the Unity Movement was hoping that, with the ANC starting to take a much more radical turn under the pressure from its youth wing, it would begin to eschew a policy of involvement in certain segregated institutions or, as they termed it, "Kahnism".⁴⁵ By the time of the meeting in Langa though, these differences still existed, but, in the face of Van Riebeeck, they were temporarily set aside so as to ensure that no one from Langa would take up residence in the 'tribal village' on the foreshore that was to show the world that "Africans are still backward".⁴⁶

Befitting a gathering of "thinking African[s]", the meeting opened with a report-back from the history research group. A C Jordan, novelist and lecturer in African studies at the University of Cape Town, first outlined a process of European conquest that had been initiated by Van Riebeeck. He referred to "land grabbing", the imposition of taxes to acquire labour, the exploitation of workers and the denial of education to 'non-Europeans'. The second part of his report-back drew on examples in South Africa's past where 'collaboration' in the "oppressor's wars" had not only gone unrewarded but also had led to greater repression: the Act of Union, which denied political rights to blacks, had been the 'reward' for participation in the Anglo-Boer War; the shooting of people at Bulhoek and Bondelswartz had followed on the First World War; after "active service" in the Second World War, the strike by miners in 1946 had been quelled by the use of brutal force. This was clearly a warning to those who were considering imbibing the offerings of Van Riebeeck that they would be more than disappointed and would find themselves in conditions of even worse oppression. With a

⁴⁴*The Guardian*, 10 April 1952.

⁴⁵See Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, vol 2, Document 67: Letter from I B Tabata to Nelson Mandela, 16 June 1948, pp.362-8.

⁴⁶*The Guardian*, 27 September 1951.

rhetorical flourish, he ended his speech: "What have we to celebrate? Can we celebrate our own enslavement?" ⁴⁷

The discussion which ensued after Jordan's speech was almost unanimous in agreement with its sentiments. The only dissent came from Julius Malangabi, past president of the ANC in the western Cape, who said that he wanted to know more about Van Riebeeck, not about South African history over the past 300 years. In these terms, A C Jordan had not provided the type of history that Malangabi, with his limited notion of the past that the festival was seeking to portray, had expected when the research group had been appointed. Malangabi, however, found that he had little support for his view:

Miss M Nongauza replied that Van Riebeeck regarded Africans as stinking dogs.

Mr Tukwayo, also replying to Mr Malangabi, said the invitation was an insult. It was like a guest taking his dogs with him to a wedding party.

Mr Molelekwa said old men like Mr Malangabi are incurable and should be isolated so as not to infect the younger generation.⁴⁸

Johnson Ngwevela of the ANC and a member of the Langa Advisory Board, also came out strongly against Malangabi and gave his whole-hearted support to a call for a boycott of the celebrations. Much to the disappointment of the NAD, a resolution was adopted, at what its officials reluctantly admitted was a "well-attended meeting", to have nothing at all to do with the Van Riebeeck festival. The NAD decided not to pursue the matter further, but to try to formulate some specific alternative suggestions and somewhat desperately to search for "'a place in the sun' for a Native choir".⁴⁹

For all its involvement in the particular issue around Langa's participation in Van Riebeeck's "tribal courtyard", the ANC was not devoting much attention to Van Riebeeck. This was because the resistance to the festival was secondary to the campaign of mass mobilisation that was being planned against apartheid legislation, the former being a "prelude" to help achieve

⁴⁷*The Torch*, 9 October 1951.

⁴⁸*The Torch*, 9 October 1951.

⁴⁹Native Commissioner, Salt River to Wyatt Sampson, 15 October 1951, CAD, NTS 9787 987/400; *The Torch*, 9 October 1951.

the latter.⁵⁰ In July 1951, at a joint conference of the leaders of the ANC, the SAIC and FRAC, it had been decided to establish a council with representatives from these various organisations which would submit recommendations on how to proceed with a mass campaign to demand the repeal of the "oppressive laws" of apartheid. The Joint Planning Council, reporting back in November 1951, suggested that an ultimatum be sent to the government demanding the repeal of the laws by 29 February 1952. If this demand was not met by the government, the Planning Council proposed that the organisations take recourse to mass action, specifically defying the "unjust laws" and, in some instances, resorting to industrial action. It recommended two dates as possibilities on which this mass action should begin. The first and favoured option of the Joint Planning Council was 6 April 1952:

We consider this day to be most appropriate for the commencement of the struggle as it marks one of the greatest turning points in South African history by the advent of European settlers in this country, followed by colonialism and imperialist exploitation which has degraded, humiliated and kept in bondage the vast masses of the non-White people.⁵¹

The other possibility was 26 June 1952 which would recall the National Day of Protest which had taken place two years earlier when there had been a massive stay-away from work in response to the killing of 18 people in May Day clashes with the police on the Witwatersrand and the impending Unlawful Organisations Bill. Apart from practical considerations - would 6 April leave sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements for the campaign? - this was clearly a choice about the assignation of historical meaning. 6 April, coinciding with the tercentenary, would emphasise that a direct challenge was being posed to Van Riebeeck and racial oppression. Such an explicitly directed gesture would also fit in with the militancy of the ANC Youth League, whose president, Nelson Mandela, had warned "that the struggle should avoid the danger of bargaining for concessions". The date of 26 June had before 1950 held no particular significance, but its association with subsequent events could help define it as a marker of resistance, when "the first steps towards freedom" were taken.⁵² Navigating between historical meanings and organisational constraints, the ANC decided at its annual

⁵⁰N Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, London (1995), p.142.

⁵¹'Report of the Joint Planning Council of the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress', submitted to the National Congress of the ANC, 15-17 December 1951, Wits (HP), ANC Collection, Ba2.

⁵²*The Guardian*, 27 December 1951; 'Report of the Joint Planning Council'.

congress in December 1951 that protest meetings on 6 April would be a "preliminary to a campaign of passive resistance" and only after these gatherings would the date to launch the campaign be decided upon.⁵³ In addition, the proposed action was linked directly to the Van Riebeeck festival. James Moroka and Walter Sisulu, the President and Secretary General of the ANC, wrote to the Prime Minister, D F Malan, that "unless" the six "unjust laws", which they had singled out, were repealed "the African people" could not "participate in any shape or form in such celebrations".⁵⁴

Not only were many of 'the African people' and others whom the festival designated as 'non-European' refusing to partake of Van Riebeeck's nations, but there were those who were being trained thoroughly in the ways and means of the higher realms of 'western civilisation', that he had supposedly initiated in southern Africa, who were also reluctant to join in the festivities. As the school children from white schools had been taken along en masse to the festival, so the organisers expected that students from the universities in the country would assist to build floats and act in the pageantry, especially with the experience many of them had gained from their annual rag processions. And there were those who did participate. From the University of Stellenbosch, for instance, students constructed the "Dromedaris", "Simon van der Stel" and "Recognition of Afrikaans" floats, as well as providing extras for the theatricals at Granger Bay.⁵⁵ "Africa Dark and Unknown", "The First Fort", "The Gold Rush", "Higher Education" and "Africa Awakes" were presented by students from the University of Cape Town; "Dick King and his Native Servant", "The First Elections in Natal" and "Rorke's Drift" by the University of Natal; the "Sand River Convention" by Potchefstroom University; "The Birth of a Republic" by the University of the Orange Free State; "The Second Language Movement" by the University of Pretoria; and "The Legacy of Rhodes" by the university in Grahamstown bearing his name. This extensive listing, which seemingly indicates an almost overwhelmingly positive response to the festival from the universities, does not reveal the conflicts which took place in student bodies over the festival or that, at times, it was

⁵³ *Natal Daily News*, 17 March 1952; *The Guardian*, 27 December 1951.

⁵⁴ Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, vol 2, Document 88, p.477.

⁵⁵ Department of Afrikaans Kultuurgeskiedenis, US, no 214.

individual departments or associations at the various campuses which were in effect parading down Adderley Street in the first week of April.⁵⁶

In some instances, there were students, either in mass meetings or through their representative councils, who rejected the festival outright as a "racially biased" "historical farce" and called upon others in the university community to refuse to participate in its proceedings.⁵⁷ At many of the English-language universities in the country, the major debate among students revolved around the issues of academic and social segregation. Although there were very few black students on these campuses, most of the students plumed for a policy of academic non-segregation and social segregation. This meant "admission of non-Europeans to the University, but for higher education purposes only, and not as equals in the social sphere".⁵⁸ Black students should be able to use the same lecture theatres, libraries and write the same exams as white students, but would have to live in separate residences and should not make use of the sporting and recreational facilities the university had to offer. When students from these English-language universities were approached by individuals from the Van Riebeeck festival committee to participate, they adopted a similar attitude. In the Student Representative Councils' (SRC's) discussions, what was constantly reiterated was that black students were not being permitted to participate fully and imbibe the offerings of the festival and 'western civilisation'. This went against the principle of academic non-segregation, of which most of them approved. There was thus some reluctance at the campuses of the universities of Witwatersrand, Rhodes and Cape Town to bear, at the festival, the "torch of knowledge" as "leaders" who had taken root from "the seeds of European civilisation which were planted 300 years ago".⁵⁹

⁵⁶*Official Festival Programme*, pp.99-123.

⁵⁷*Varsity*, 17 September 1951.

⁵⁸*Grocott's Daily Mail*, 14 August 1951.

⁵⁹*Official Festival Programme*, p.122; The Wits University SRC turned the invitation from the festival committee on its head and agreed to participate "subject to their having full right to send a delegation representative of the University". Knowing full well that this would include black students, and that the festival organisers wanted to place 'native education' in a separate enclosure of the 'tribal village', this effectively meant that the students from Wits would not participate. Minutes of SRC Executive Meeting 23 November 1951; Minutes SRC Meeting, University of Witwatersrand, 29 November 1951, Wits (A).

One of the most heated exchanges occurred at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. In addition to providing for the "Higher Education" float, Rhodes was also requested by the pageant committee to construct and people a display for Cape Town of the nineteenth century mining magnate and pursuer of imperial ambitions after which its institution was named. When the issue of Rhodes' participation in the Van Riebeeck festival arose in August 1951, a general student gathering decided to boycott the celebrations. The reasons offered were that the festival "showed a strong racial bias", "there was a perversion of the true historical facts" and it was a "criminal waste of money". It was also felt that the festival would "foster racial disharmony and stir up political strife".⁶⁰ The main problem, expressed by the Rhodes students, was that the "African's original culture" would be portrayed as "primitive and savage" and that there was no depiction of "his development and acceptance of Western civilisation".⁶¹ If this problem could be overcome, and the "racial bias handled with delicacy", then the students could participate and promote "racial" and "national goodwill".⁶²

The "unwelcome publicity" of the "Big Rhodes Debate", led, a week later, to the hasty convention of another general student meeting on the issue.⁶³ After "about five thousand man-hours" and "probably the longest meeting" ever at Rhodes, the students decided by 190 votes to 53 (with 31 abstentions) that "multi-racial South Africa should speak and act in a spirit of widely embracing unity": Rhodes should go to the festival. This decision about participation in the Van Riebeeck festival, and the desire to show the 'benefits of civilisation to the Natives', reflected, in many senses a decision taken earlier at the same meeting to adopt a policy of academic non-segregation. According to the chairman of the meeting, the festival was the first truly national one "in the history of South Africa". The students suggested that,

⁶⁰*Eastern Province Herald, Daily Dispatch, Queenstown Daily Representative*, 11 August 1951; *The Star*, 10 August 1951.

⁶¹*Port Elizabeth Evening Post*, 10 and 11 August 1951.

⁶²*Grocott's Daily Mail*, 13 August 1951.

⁶³Minutes of Meeting of Rhodes University Senate, 30 August 1951, Cory, MS 17504; *P E Evening Post*, 11 August 1951.

in order to show "what European civilisation has meant to the Native", "the South African Native College, Fort Hare, [should] be invited to take part in the celebrations".⁶⁴

But students at the South African Native College in Alice were also hesitant about accepting the offerings from Van Riebeeck, especially when he wanted to place them in the 'tribal village' at the festival fair. At a mass meeting, a resolution was unanimously passed to dissociate the student body from the festival as it was "an insult to non-Europeans" and to promote a boycott of the celebrations.⁶⁵ There was, nonetheless, a reluctance to completely spurn the 'benefits' of 'western civilisation' and Van Riebeeck's nation. When East London's newspaper, the *Daily Dispatch*, reported that the Fort Hare students had said that their associates from Rhodes University could participate in the festival "because the mothers and fathers of these students who are celebrating have sat on our people's heads for the last three hundred years", the Fort Hare SRC hurriedly called an emergency meeting to correct the story.⁶⁶ A statement was drawn up and a letter sent to the *Dispatch* claiming that no reference had been made in the resolution to the parents of Rhodes University students "sitting on their heads". If such things were said at the meeting, the letter continued, they were the "opinion of one irresponsible student". Taking heed of their history professor, H J Chapman, who asserted that the settlers had contributed greatly to the industrial, commercial and constitutional development of South Africa,⁶⁷ the letter maintained the students were merely "*Discipulus Innocens*" [Innocent Pupils] of their "*Praeceptors*" [Teachers] from Rhodes University, to which Fort Hare was affiliated.⁶⁸

Probably of all the universities in South Africa, the one from which the festival organisers expected the largest degree of participation was the University of Cape Town. This was not

⁶⁴*The Rhodéo*, 18 August 1951.

⁶⁵*Daily Dispatch*, 24 March 1952; Fort Hare SRC Minutes, 19 March 1952, Cory, MS 14788.

⁶⁶*Daily Dispatch*, 24 March 1952; Minutes, Fort Hare SRC Emergency Meeting, 27 March 1952, Copy, MS 14788.

⁶⁷*Alice Times*, 10 April 1952.

⁶⁸*Daily Dispatch*, 4 April 1952; Minutes, Fort Hare SRC Meetings, 30 March and 1 April 1952, Cory, MS 14788.

merely because of its location in 'Van Riebeeck's city', but also because it represented an important element that had contributed to the development of what the festival defined as the 'English speaking race'. From very early on T B Davie, the principal of UCT, had been brought onto the festival committee to represent 'English speakers'. Prof Mandlebrote from the History Department at UCT, was, alongside H B Thom, an historical adviser for the festival, contributing "invaluable aid and advice" to Victor de Kock in compiling its official pictorial history, *Our Three Centuries*.⁶⁹ As was noted above, student expertise with floats was also required and clubs and departments provided this. In addition, the annual rag procession was given the official sanction of the festival committee, who, through negotiation, moved it forward to 29 March so as not to coincide with the major events of the festival, incorporated it into the official festival programme and promised to allocate it funds (a figure in the region of £20 000 was mentioned).⁷⁰ UCT also was charged with the task of staging the Higher Education exhibit at the festival fair and T B Davie asked deans of the various faculties to convene a committee to facilitate this. Under Davie's guidance, this committee spent a great deal of its time arranging the science displays for the fair.⁷¹ In this latter guise UCT was more than just a representative of an 'English heritage' or a provider of pageantry but was declared, by the festival chair, to be the "*oudste inrigting in ons land vir hoër onderwys*" [oldest institution in our land for higher education]. For playing a fundamental role in the "*voorbereiding van ons jeug in die diens van land en volk*" [preparation of our youth in the service of the land and nation] UCT was being proclaimed, in its own right, as a Jan van Riebeeck.

This claim did not go down well with some of the students at the campus which stood on Groote Schuur estate, bequeathed by Cecil John Rhodes. As at Rhodes and Wits universities, the major issue of the day was that of academic and social segregation. One grouping, largely Afrikaans speakers, favoured the creation of separate academic institutions for white and black students. Another grouping, clustered around the immediate past-president of the SRC, Zac

⁶⁹V De Kock, *Our Three Centuries*, Cape Town (1952), p.5. For the discussions on the composition of the festival committees see chapter two.

⁷⁰*Varsity*, 17 September 1951; *Official Festival Programme*, p.45.

⁷¹See correspondence between T B Davie and the Secretary for Education, October-December 1951, CAD, UOD 2227, E357, Part Two.

de Beer (and including in its ranks Martin Thompson, who was to assume the role of his great-great grandfather in Adderley Street) defended academic non-segregation and social segregation, maintaining that social equality could not "operate in this country". Thirdly, there were those who were more inclined to do away with social segregation as well but felt that for strategic reasons it was better to keep to the "existing practice in the social sphere". Any attempt to push for equality in this area at this stage was seen as possibly undermining the policy of academic non-segregation which the university upheld. It was this latter group which proposed that the student body in no way whatsoever take part in the tercentenary celebrations.⁷²

The at times heated debate over participation in the festival at UCT first surfaced in a SRC meeting on 12 September when a motion was placed on the table that it was the "right and duty of the University of Cape Town to participate in these celebrations". At the forefront of opposing the motion was Ronald Segal, a student who had arrived at UCT in 1950 from Sea Point High School, had fraternised with students and lecturers who were involved with the Unity Movement and had immersed himself in cultural societies, teaching at 'non-European' night schools and university politics.⁷³ Segal argued that as the festival and the pageantry were educationally pernicious, historically inaccurate and racially exclusionary (some UCT students could not take part in the festival even if they wished to), the SRC should not support the motion. He was supported by other members of the SRC who drew upon their own studies to show that there was little historical veracity in the pageantry and that what was being presented was an outmoded conceptualisation of South African history.

Mr Katz said that most scientific historians agree that the old historical interpretation of Theal, on which the pageant was based, was incorrect. If we supported the Festival we would be agreeing with this interpretation. Such things as the abolition of slavery, which had been of major importance in the development of South Africa ... had not been included in the pageant, while such subjects as Lord Charles Somerset on a hunting expedition had been included. He was not against a historical pageant, but this was not a pageant, but rather a propaganda campaign.⁷⁴

⁷²*Varsity*, 9 August and 17 September 1951; UCT SRC Minutes, 12 September 1951, UCT (MA).

⁷³Interview with Ronald Segal, 14 August 1992; *Varsity*, 9 August 1951.

⁷⁴*Varsity*, 17 September 1951.

Another student concurred, referring to the pageant as an "historical farce" which had neglected so "great an event as the Emancipation of Slaves". It is not clear from where these students had acquired this historical knowledge, but it is possible that they were being taught by Leonard Thompson and Jean van der Poel, who filled the senior lecturer and lecturer posts at the time in the History Department at UCT. Their interpretation of South African history, which centred on the condition of "oppressed racial groups", differed markedly from that of both Theal and their head of Department, Mandelbrote, whose major interest was in the workings of colonial society, particularly the constitutional development of the Cape colony before and after the introduction of Responsible Government.⁷⁵ These student voices, however, were minority ones, and Segal could not muster enough support to defeat the original motion to participate, proposed by J M Didcott and M L Mitchell, which was carried by nine votes to six. It did nonetheless add a rider that the executive of the student body draw up a list of objections to the pageant programme and submit these to the SRC for consideration at a later stage.⁷⁶

A few days after this decision was taken, the SRC executive was petitioned by 54 students to hold a mass meeting to re-consider the issue of participation in the festival. The meeting, which the SRC was constitutionally required to call, took place on 17 September, in Jameson Hall. There were about 500 students in attendance and Segal, once again, was the keynote speaker advocating a boycott of the festival. He recalls that as he stood up to speak, the students who were Nationalist Party supporters, and who were in favour of the festival and its objectives, started "howling and singing". For Segal this reminded him of his school days at Sea Point High where he was the subject of much verbal and physical abuse because of his wealthy background, ("I was picked up by a driver in a Chrysler"), his elocution, academic performance and loathing of rugby. "It was school all over again, I thought; the bullies were

⁷⁵Interview with Leonard Thompson conducted by Lynn Berat, 14 August 1993, *SAHJ* 30 (May 1994), pp.17-19; UCT Faculty of Arts, Board Minutes, 4 September 1950; 12 April 1951, UCT (MA). South African history from 1788 was taught to about 50 students who chose to do the subject in second year, following an introductory level course in the first year of study which gave an "Outline of the History of Western Civilization", UCT Calendar, 1952.

⁷⁶Minutes, UCT SRC meeting, 12 September 1951, UCT (MA); *Varsity*, 17 September 1951; *The Star*, 13 September 1951.

baying".⁷⁷ Once the crescendo had died down, he started speaking and a silence enveloped the hall. As he began to speak, he claims that a feeling of "exaltation" filled him:

I was hitting back at ... a small cluster of taunting boys in a corner of the school courtyard. I don't suppose that I shall ever speak like that again, in a surge that left me drained and desolate afterwards. It must have been, it seems to me now, a sort of seizure, a convulsion of will to batter that wild jeering into silence.⁷⁸

According to Segal, the hall erupted into applause when he had finished, and even the bullies "in the bays" of Jameson Hall had been defeated by his "will to overcome".⁷⁹ Yet, because the meeting had run over time, and there was not a quorum left, no vote was taken.⁸⁰ The SRC decided to stand by its original motion to participate and to forward to the organising committee of the festival suggestions as to how the pageant should be altered. These recommendations revolved around how to include "Non-Europeans" in a South African past: as soldiers in the two world wars, as part of "Education today" and as converts on the Moravian mission station at Genadendal.⁸¹ Although little heed was taken of these suggestions by the pageant committee, these ruptures at UCT were widely reported and, while those opposing participation were represented as a minority of the student population,⁸² it did indicate that there was not the unanimity over Van Riebeeck on Rhodes's estate that the festival committee had assumed it could automatically count upon. The strongest advocates of academic non-segregation and those who had acquired alternative knowledges of South Africa's past were prepared to confront the tercentenary festival and all of its (mis)representations.⁸³

⁷⁷R Segal, *Into Exile*, London (1993), p.93.

⁷⁸Segal, *Into Exile*, p.93.

⁷⁹Segal, *Into Exile*, pp.93-4.

⁸⁰*Die Volksblad*, 18 September 1951.

⁸¹Minutes, UCT SRC Executive, 3 October 1951; Minutes, UCT SRC, 21 September and 19 November 1951, UCT (MA).

⁸²See for example, *Die Volksblad*, 18 September 1951.

⁸³The following year Segal and Benjamin Pogrand, the Day Students Councillor, attempted to revive this anti-Van Riebeeck festival campaign by advocating a boycott of the university rag magazine, *Sax Appeal*, which had brought out a special festival issue. On the front cover, accompanying a pin-up of a woman in a swimsuit, the festival logo was emblazoned. Among its contents were a message from the festival chair, cartoons

As the final festival plans were being put into place at the end of 1951, it was therefore becoming increasingly apparent that the organisers were starting to encounter opposition to their plans and versions of the past from a variety of sectors, particularly from those whom it termed non-Europeans and wanted to incorporate into separate programmes. The most vocal opposition was coming from the Unity Movement which saw the attempts to involve separate coloured cultural groupings in the festival as the ultimate insult. Not only was the festival "glorifying ... 300 years of violence" by "turning Van Riebeeck into a divine ancestor, a superman" and ignoring "the existence of millions of Non-white people who originally lived in South Africa", the Unity Movement claimed, but it was also assuming a stance of "supreme, if not sadistic arrogance to try and force the victims to celebrate as well".⁸⁴ Similarly the ANC, although not a prime advocate of the boycott of the festival, was using the date of 6 April 1952 as a marker of historical significance to launch its campaign of defiance. Yet there were many other reasons why Van Riebeeck was being either actively contested or ignored. These involved asserting the status of a racial or educated or 'westernised' or university elite, with at times these categories overlapping. More often than not, these responses were related to the invitations that the festival organisers had sent out to specific, largely racially categorised, constituencies. It was already apparent by the end of 1951 that many of these invitations were being spurned and that Sheik Yusuf would encounter problems in getting his company together. There was an imminent danger that his period of exile at the Cape might be more lonely than even he or the Dutch East India Company had previously anticipated.

Promoting the boycott on stage

From the last quarter of 1951 until Sunday 6 April 1952, when the ANC held a mass rally on Cape Town's Grand Parade, the opponents of Van Riebeeck who had already started identifying themselves in the previous months launched an all-out campaign to promote the

on "*Die Volksplanting*" and "Van Riebeeck Revisits the Cape" and a mock replica of "Ye Olde Dutch Times". Segal and Pogrand were severely reprimanded for their actions by the SRC, the latter, at the same time, also reaffirming its previous decision to support the festival. *Sax Appeal*, UCT, Cape Town (1952); *Varsity*, 21, 28 March, 24 April 1952; Minutes, UCT SRC, 24 March 1952, UCT (MA).

⁸⁴*The Torch*, 9 October and 24 December 1951, 8 January 1952.

boycott of his festival. On these oppositional stages, it was oratory that was the primary vehicle used to promote the boycott as histories were produced, sometimes in a very shorthand fashion, explicitly linked to political programmes. The appeal, or otherwise, of moral and political argument transmitted by the various speakers bore knowledge of the past to audiences as "They Marched ... And They Listened".⁸⁵

Yet, this notion of being persuaded by listening was continually at odds with the need for the play of emotion, metaphor and excitement to be enacted so as to convey and acquire messages. This paralleled the very same dilemma that had faced the organisers of the pageant for the Van Riebeeck festival, who were attempting to evoke an emotional response but at the same time ensure that a 'serious' historical message was being conveyed. Although there was the need and sensitivity for the dramatic, where borders between fantasy and reality were continually blurred and the visual and emotional were privileged, there is little evidence that the opponents of the festival ever considered going to the same extent as the organisers of the tercentenary by planning to stage elaborate pageants. Finding appropriate models, particularly in Cape Town, for a spectacle of resistance must have in itself presented immense difficulties. The Moshoeshoe, Ntsikana and Mfengu festivals which were celebrated in Langa in the 1940s and '50s were not spectacular and their appeal was severely circumscribed. They mobilised participants around ethnic and religious identities in programmes that usually involved a series of speeches, songs and prayers, followed by eating and drinking.⁸⁶ The annual New Year 'coon carnival' processions by troupes of minstrels through the streets of Cape Town was generally seen by anti-apartheid organisations as a form of debasement, a series of playful antics that merely served to amuse the white onlookers. A suggestion was offered in *The Guardian* that the carnival should take on themes that reflected opposition to government policies and that until it did so it would merely remain a vehicle "to keep the coloured man a happy servant".⁸⁷ And the University of Cape Town's hospital rag procession which raised money for medical institutions in the Cape peninsula was hardly appropriate given its

⁸⁵*Spark*, 11 April 1952.

⁸⁶Molapo, 'Sports, Festivals and Popular Politics', ch.2.

⁸⁷*The Guardian*, 2 August 1951. See also *The Guardian*, 4 January 1951 and *The Torch*, 18 March 1952, for similar critiques of the 'coon carnival'.

self-proclaimed intention to be conducted in "the spirit of the non-political" and its continued association with the organisers of the Van Riebeeck festival.⁸⁸ Moreover, the opponents of the festival conjured up similar images of rag as the organisers projected, seeing it as a "circus" that, in this case, was far removed from the "reality" that the "self-respecting non-Europeans" sought to portray.⁸⁹

Extending the pageantry of the festival to the oppositional stage also contained within it the problem that play and drama might become the central focus of attention. While in itself this could be utilised to convey different messages and to mock the drama presented by the festival organisers, the pervasiveness of the festival's projections in newspapers and on film and radio made this difficult to achieve. If the dramatic were promoted still further, it might tend to reproduce rather than undermine the images of the festival. Such self-styled Van Riebeeck festivals were commonplace on school stages in the early months of 1952. One such drama was re-enacted at Durban Indian Girls High School.

There was a delicious aroma of coffee in the air. The strains of "Die Stem" and the "Marseillaise" could be heard. Dainty Dutch vrous and English and French ladies in the pretty gowns of the period tripped over the playground with their partners. Malay and Indian ladies in their graceful dresses and a Zulu intombi, blowing her mouth organ, mingled freely with them. The tens and nines competed against one another by making models illustrating certain events in Cape history. The tens, who modelled the arrival of the 1820 settlers, took the prize. But the other two models made by the nines, illustrating the arrival of Van Riebeeck and the Great Trek, were also well done and the girls took great pains over them. The whole scene was one of great festivity - we were having our Van Riebeeck celebrations - the first of the many memorable events of this year.⁹⁰

This play, which celebrated the landing and the history that was being associated with it, almost mimicked the pageantry of the festival, although the "free mingling" was not what the organisers had in mind for the streets of Cape Town. Children acted the parts of individual characters which were being foregrounded in the pageant, assuming "adult roles" and possibly unconsciously acquiring the historical knowledge that the festival sought to portray in the

⁸⁸*Varsity*, 24 April 1952.

⁸⁹*The Guardian*, 4 October 1951.

⁹⁰ 'A Review of the Year' by Joan Naidoo and 'Social Club' by Zubeida Moosa in *Durban Indian Girls High School Magazine*, vol IX, December 1952, pp.6, 21.

process.⁹¹ Obviously this was not the type of drama that the opponents of the festival wanted to encourage on a large scale as they sought to counter what *The Guardian* derisively termed the "the amateurish 'realism' of the proposed tableau" for the streets of Cape Town.⁹²

But pageantry did not necessarily have to copy the content of the festival, and even when it did so it might be subverted. Indeed, play, drama and festivals have been used over the centuries as key media to express political opposition. The public participation as active actors and audience enables a challenge to the ordering that the organised pageantry attempts to set in place.⁹³ There was one explicit attempt to mount a festival that countered the intentions of the Van Riebeeck celebrations by FRAC. Like the festival, FRAC's commemoration was to include a series of historical tableaux, but FRAC claimed that, in contrast to the official script that was being written for the streets of Cape Town, its history was going to be both objective and based upon a nationalism that drew together "all the sections of our people".⁹⁴ The content of such a history was never made explicit but a writer in *The Guardian* had suggested earlier that it could include a series of figures from the past who were able to contribute dramatic material as "the greatest individual nation-builders": Simon van der Stel, the "Coloured man" who was "the most far-seeing ... of the Dutch governors"; Moshesh, who "welded" the "Basotho people" from fragments"; Shaka, who raised the "most powerful warrior empire south of the equator"; Gandhi, who left "his footprints" in South Africa; Makana, "the Xhosa hero" who "drowned in captivity off Robben Island".⁹⁵ As in the 'peoples' pageant' that was planned for the official festival, this nation and its past was exclusively male, but, in contrast to Van Riebeeck's history, many races went into constituting this nation. Instead of being built upon colonialism and its alibi 'western civilisation', resistance to racial oppression was the

⁹¹Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, p.5. Samuel is much more definite in his formulation of the acquisition of historical knowledge through "children's theatricals", although he provides little evidence of how this happens apart from listing various examples of these productions.

⁹²*The Guardian*, 4 October 1951.

⁹³D Edgar, 'Festivals of the Oppressed', *New Formations*, 3 (Winter 1987), pp.19-30.

⁹⁴*The Guardian*, 11 October 1951.

⁹⁵*The Guardian*, 25 January 1951. A year later, Eddie Roux, the author of *Time Longer than Rope: A History of the Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa*, first published in 1948, suggested other figures to be added to this list: John Philip, Tengo Jabavu, the Schreiners, Bishop Colenso, John Dube, Johannes Nkosi and Clements Kadalie (*The Guardian*, 14 February 1952).

force that moved this history forward and it was racial unity that was needed to carry it further. A similar sentiment was expressed by Silas Molema at the SAIC conference in January 1952, when he called for "men and women of colour", "the Indian, The African and the Eur-African or Coloured people" to unite as oppressed people in order to fight for "common rights".⁹⁶ Subcommittees of historians, artists and dramatists were set in place to develop this 'inclusive' national past, and it was planned to ask the Cape Town City Council for a grant of £500 and for the mayor and three other councillors to sit on its pageant committee.⁹⁷ There is no evidence that the Council, which had already donated some £25 000 to the Van Riebeeck festival, was approached by FRAC in this regard. With FRAC spending most of its time on launching the defiance campaign in the western Cape, their anti-Van Riebeeck celebration never came to fruition.⁹⁸

Instead of parading in the streets and performing in stadia the opponents of the Van Riebeeck festival staged their opposition in rhetorical displays in church and market halls, municipal buildings, on hillsides and in town squares. The ANC and organisations that were aligned with it, in particular, made use of these stages to promote and draw attention to their campaign of defiance after D F Malan had turned down their call for the repeal of apartheid's 'unjust laws'. Casting apartheid as a 'natural' system which was based upon biologically determined differences Malan, had not only claimed that the structures and laws of racial separation were just but that 'natives' were in no way to be seen as constituting part of the same South African nation as those who represented their 'European' ancestry as being derived from Van Riebeeck. Thus he castigated the ANC for approaching him directly instead of going through the Native Affairs Department and suggested that the Bantu Authorities Act was "designed to give the Africans the opportunity of enlightened administration of their own affairs". This outright rejection by Malan of the ANC's call for all races to be part of the same nation "of the land of their birth" left the ANC with little choice but to embark on its planned defiance

⁹⁶Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, vol 2, Document 89, p.480.

⁹⁷*The Guardian*, 11 October 1951; *Cape Argus*, 4 October 1951; *Die Volksblad*, 5 October 1951; *Natal Witness*, 6 October 1951; *Die Burger*, 6 October 1951.

⁹⁸G Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, pp.267-8. See chapter two of this thesis for a discussion on the Cape Town City Council's grant to the Van Riebeeck festival.

campaign and to spurn the separate offerings of Van Riebeeck as no "substitute for direct representation in the Councils of State".⁹⁹

With Van Riebeeck providing more of a vehicle for the impending action, rather than being the direct focus of attention, it would appear that the meetings around the defiance campaign did little more than offer brief historical excursions. From media representations of the meetings, it seems that the emphasis was on support, organisation, recruitment, volunteers, discipline, lessons and funding in order to prepare for action some time later in the year. The only occasions when it seems that history was extensively used was by Silas Molema, the ANC treasurer who had written histories such as *The Bantu Past and Present* (1920) and *Chief Moroka: His Life, His Times, His Country and His People* (1951). At both the South African Indian Congress in January 1952 and at his home base of Mafikeng, where meetings opposing the local Van Riebeeck festival in the town and launching the defiance campaign were organised by the ANC branch, Molema drew extensively upon the past and berated Van Riebeeck for inaugurating the process of land dispossession.¹⁰⁰

What is notable about these histories is that they indicate a quite marked shift in Molema's political thinking. In *Chief Moroka*, in the chapter dealing with "The Renaissance" of the Barolong with the assistance of missionaries, he included enthusiastic accounts of the 1938 and 1949 voortrekker commemorations. He recalled that when the wagons of the symbolic trek reached Thaba Nchu in 1938, there to welcome them was Chief John Moroka who, in "fitting words" recalled "poignant incidents of a century previously" and presented the trekkers with an ox "to recall and renew the co-operation and friendship which had subsisted a hundred years previously between Chief Moroka and the Voortrekkers". The actual Voortrekker Monument he described as majestic, grand in conception, displaying a "wealth of design, and

⁹⁹Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, vol 2, Document 90: 'Letter replying to letter from the Prime Minister's Office and statement of intention to launch defiance campaign, from Dr J S Moroka and W M Sisulu to Prime Minister D F Malan, February 11, 1952', pp.480-2.

¹⁰⁰'Catalogue of Oppressive Laws made against Africans by the Union Government since 1910', speech delivered at the Elite Hall, Mafikeng, 21 February 1952, Wits (HP) ANC, Fb22. It is at this stage unclear from the notes for the speech that were delivered who the speaker was, but given that Molema lived in Mafikeng, his extensive historical knowledge and a tone that was similar to his SAIC address, it does seem reasonable to assume he was the speaker.

beauty of workmanship".¹⁰¹ In 1952 such commemorations were being labelled on stage by Molema as "European festivals" which celebrated the destruction, exploitation and degradation of black communities. The "salient" and "dominant fact of South African history", he told the members of the SAIC, was

... that all the monuments, all the celebrations and all the feasts of the white man have a diametrically opposite meaning to the black man, because every monument of the white man perpetuates the memory of the annihilation of some black community, every celebration of victory the remembrance of our defeat, his every feast means our famine and his laughter our tears.¹⁰²

The impending Van Riebeeck festival was another one of these occasions and Molema referred to it as a "frenzy of self-adulation".¹⁰³

In rendering "the shameful catalogue of Oppressive Laws" to the audience in Mafikeng, he presented Africans as free, happy and independent prior to the arrival of the European "pirates" from "across the seas". It was the "white adventurer, merchant and administrators" who undermined the work of the missionaries and the nineteenth century imperial government by stealing "the land, and the cattle and the labour" from the "Black Man", barring him from the franchise and turning him into a "devil ... [b]orn to serve his white master then go down like a dog into the grave". Van Riebeeck was the first of these 'pirates' setting an example when he "cheated the African and stole his land". To participate in the Van Riebeeck festival, then would be like "glorifying in their own defeat".¹⁰⁴

These histories delivered by Molema were very similar to that presented at Langa by A C Jordan in September 1951. The story of conquest, dispossession, enslavement and the warning against collaboration were all there. What is much more evident, however, is that while this was not the type of history of South Africa as a 'European' nation that D F Malan and Van Riebeeck sought to portray, there was a marked, albeit unintentional, resemblance to the

¹⁰¹S M Molema, *Chief Moroka: His Life, His Times, His Country and His People*, Cape Town (1951), pp.191, 198-9.

¹⁰²Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, vol 2, Document 89, p.478.

¹⁰³Karis and Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge*, vol 2, Document 89, p.478.

¹⁰⁴'Catalogue of Oppressive Laws'; Resolution of the Non-European National Organisations', February 1952; 'Africans of all Classes and Tribes Unite', Mafikeng, February 1952, Wits (HP), ANC, Fb22.

festival's histories. At the very core of the festival was the embellishment of a distinction between settler and African in order to provide Jan van Riebeeck with the alibi of history to commemorate his landing in 1652. By using the self-same distinction, Molema was able to turn whites into Europeans who brought exploitation and blacks into oppressed people who were inherently Africans. It was the latter whom he called upon to unite and develop "race pride" in order to achieve salvation and liberation.¹⁰⁵

Molema's extensive use of history at meetings leading up to the defiance campaign seems to have been exceptional. When history was brought on-stage, it tended to be with a dramatic flourish that set it off from the preceding speeches. As was planned, most of these meetings took place on the weekend of 5-6 April 1952 so as to coincide with the Van Riebeeck festival and to present a direct challenge to the proceedings that were taking place in the streets of Cape Town. On 6 April in Fordsburg, Johannesburg, the meeting started off with prayers, messages of support and instructions for action, after which Dr Moroka, the president of the ANC, addressed the crowd. An almost complete silence enveloped the gathering as, adorned in a black, green and gold "Mantle of Freedom", he told them that the celebrations of Van Riebeeck's landing were ignoring the "role of the Non-Europeans in South Africa". Van Riebeeck, he said, had brought slavery to South Africa and this was what still pervaded white attitudes towards "the black".¹⁰⁶ In this short hand history for the political stage, Moroka cast all that was the South African past into the image of Van Riebeeck to create a history which used slavery as the icon of racial oppression over 300 years that needed to be dismantled by embarking upon mass action against apartheid's laws.

This historical vision was repeated at other meetings around the country on 6 April. J B Marks, the Transvaal president of the ANC, gave a speech in Port Elizabeth where he labelled Van Riebeeck's day as one of protest "against 300 years of oppression on the non-Europeans in South Africa".¹⁰⁷ In Alice, on the Friday prior to the defiance campaign meeting, in a Van Riebeeck day parade, the Professor of History from Fort Hare, H J Chapman, had narrated

¹⁰⁵'Africans of all Classes and Tribes Unite', Mafikeng, February 1952.

¹⁰⁶*The Spark*, 11 April 1952; *The Guardian*, 10 April 1952.

¹⁰⁷*Eastern Province Herald*, 7 April 1952.

a history from "the landing", through "the Huguenots", "the settlers", "the Great Trek" to "Commerce" as "the life blood of the nation". Two days later at a "protest meeting" in the Bantu Presbyterian Church in Alice, the Professor of African Studies at Fort Hare and Cape president of the ANC, Z K Matthews, was calling "the past three hundred years" a time of "humiliations and indignities", when "the gulf between the inhabitants of this sub-continent" had widened "as a result of the short-sighted policies of those who had controlled the various South African governments during that period".¹⁰⁸

The defiance campaign meeting on Cape Town's Grand Parade on 6 April made most reference to the festival and its interpretation of history. The spatial proximity to the festival and the lavish, incessant daily publicity given to its events made it difficult to ignore. On the afternoon of 6 April, the festival was reaching its climax in a formal service that contained very little of the razzamatazz that had characterised the previous days' events. A wreath-laying ceremony was performed in the presence of "high dignitaries" at the base of a replica of Van Riebeeck's statue on the foreshore, a prayer was read by the Ambassador of the Netherlands, a series of mainly religious songs was rendered by the Transvaal Festival choir and the service was concluded with the singing of the Wilhelmus, the Dutch national anthem. The sense of simplicity which was brought to bear on the ceremony was intended to ensure that the festival would be seen as a serious rendition of a history which solemnly bound the settler nation together.¹⁰⁹

As the festival endeavoured to reach for the culmination and consecration of its past on the foreshore, on the Grand Parade speakers were referring to the proceedings that were taking place a few hundred metres away as a celebration of "300 years of white baaskap". Cissie Gool said that the festival was mere "gilded hypocrisy and distorted history" and that one float was missing from the pageantry and that was the "Float of Truth". This truth, said Johnny Gomas of the Franchise Action Council, was that in the past 300 years the "non-Europeans

¹⁰⁸ *Alice Times*, 10 April 1952. See also *Daily Dispatch*, 8 April 1952.

¹⁰⁹ *Official Festival Programme*, pp.89-90; *Die Burger*, 11 April 1952.

had lost their rights more and more .. and were today hated by the whites". The only recourse left was to fight for these rights by joining in the defiance campaign.¹¹⁰

The continual allusion to 300 years at these meetings to promote the defiance campaign compacted the time of Van Riebeeck as the fount of all that followed in South African history. But there was a significant difference between these 300 years and the ones that the festival organisers sought to promote. In the festival's version Van Riebeeck provided the basis of the future, something on which to build. Those gathered on 6 April in Fordsburg's "Freedom Square", on Cape Town's Grand Parade and in the Presbyterian Church in Alice, were concerned to bring that history to an end, to give it an aura of pastness. These "days of Van Riebeeck", stretching from 1652 to the present (1952), Moroka declared to be over: now "African, Indian and Coloured people were demanding their rights and freedom". Dr Bokwe, the national chair of the ANC, asserted that the theme of the Van Riebeeck festival should not have been 'We Build a Nation' but rather "We Bury a Nation". Rev J Jolobe called upon Africans to "answer the call of destiny and fly like eagles to the skies of fame".¹¹¹ What this 'call of destiny' entailed was still rather vague but it did include a growing popular movement, aspiring towards African salvation.¹¹² In this context, history (deriving, although not solely, from Jan van Riebeeck) as the bearer of modernity, had failed the 'test of time', bringing about "death, destruction, calamity, frustration and chaos",¹¹³ and now needed to be ended as "the struggle ... against the oppression of the last 300 years" began.¹¹⁴

Although the defiance campaign meetings made limited use of history and contested the representations of the past that were being projected in the festival, those associated with the Unity Movement directed their focus much more squarely on the tercentenary and promoted the boycott of its events more actively in the months immediately leading up to the landing

¹¹⁰*Daily Dispatch*, 7 April 1952; *The Guardian*, 10 April 1952.

¹¹¹*Port Elizabeth Evening Post*, 7 April 1952; *Alice Times*, 10 April 1952.

¹¹²Lodge, *Black Politics*, p.34; Interview with Vuma Nkosinkulu, Grahamstown, 25 January 1994; Interview with Sipho Makalima, Alice, 20 January 1994.

¹¹³Letter from N B Lukashe, *Evening Post*, 15 February 1952.

¹¹⁴*Rand Daily Mail*, 7 April 1952.

of Van Riebeeck. Both the All-African Convention and the African Political Organisation which were by then affiliated to the Unity Movement, and supported its policy of non-collaboration, discussed the festival at length and gave their full backing to promoting an active stay away from the festival. But it was in Cape Town, where the Unity Movement had a large support base among teachers designated coloured and where the festival was making its presence most visibly felt that the boycott campaign was centred. Meetings involving the Welcome Estate-Rylands Civic Association, Gleemoor Civic Association, Wetton Ratepayers Association, and the Bloemhof Flats Housing Scheme had already indicated their support for the boycott and once the Unity Movement officially opened its campaign against the festival on 18 January 1952, others followed.¹¹⁵ Regular meetings were held all over Cape Town, in the city centre, District Six and Schotsche Kloof, through to Kensington, Vasco, Elsies River, Kewtown, Grassy Park and Nyanga to advocate the stay-away. The two to three hundred people who attended each of these meetings were given information about the type of history that the festival sought to portray, as well as critiques of that history and were consistently warned about the dangers of collaboration in order to persuade them to keep away from the activities that were planned for the foreshore.¹¹⁶

Although these meetings were effective in terms of mobilising support for the stay away, members of the Unity Movement felt a little uneasy about slogans and speeches becoming the basis for organisation. The brevity and performance of speeches could provide followers who had a facile understanding and an inability to carry forward the policy of non-collaboration. Although the dramatic was used, and sometimes very effectively - "Let the masters celebrate," Mr Tabata said amid applause, "for they will never again be able to celebrate. This is their last supper."¹¹⁷ - it was the spoken word, albeit on stage, as the conveyer of a sometimes lengthy history, that tended to dominate Unity Movement meetings where calls were being made to boycott the 'Festival of Hate'. The "educational work" of conveying a knowledge of

¹¹⁵*The Torch*, 18 September, 2, 9 and 16 October 1951; 19 February 1952.

¹¹⁶*The Torch*, 5 February, 18 March 1952.

¹¹⁷*The Torch*, 5 February 1952.

the past on the political stage was the basis to achieve an "intelligent" "understanding" and "practical application of those ideas".¹¹⁸

These history lessons were similar in vein to the ones that were being delivered by the ANC in that slavery was used as the central motif to characterise South African history. Wycliff Tsotsi, the president of the All-African Convention, summed up South African history in one sentence: "the story of the military conquest and dispossession, of social ostracism and the political and economic enslavement of the indigenous African inhabitants of this country by European invaders".¹¹⁹ Various pieces of legislation were given the appellation 'slave' to denote their oppressive content. At the meeting organised by the Unity Movement on the Grand Parade on 30 April, for instance, Ben Kies referred to the Act of Union as a "slave act".¹²⁰ In Unity Movement pasts slavery was also used as a vehicle to discourage participation in the Van Riebeeck festival, the latter event being condemned as a celebration of the former age. I B Tabata, speaking in Landsdowne, gave the slave metaphor an international context, by relating how in Haiti old slaves would celebrate the arrival of new slaves by slaughtering a beast. This, he maintained, was how slaves were made to celebrate their own enslavement.¹²¹

A primary concern of these speeches was to challenge the authority of the festival organisers to present a racially exclusive past as constituting South African history. It was continually emphasised that what was being presented as facts by the festival held little validity and were merely pieces of information that were being twisted to suit a political programme of racial domination. Or, as Tsotsi put it, they were used for claiming "a knowledge of South African History" merely based on "the colour of their skins".¹²² Yet, when it came to presenting South African history for a "true South African nation" as made by facts rather than by race, it was race that was its defining characteristic. Tsotsi's lengthy speech to the AAC convention in December 1951 - *The Guardian's* reporter berated it as "pedantic" - was almost entirely a

¹¹⁸*The Educational Journal*, April 1952.

¹¹⁹*Umthunywa*, 12 January 1952.

¹²⁰*Eastern Province Herald*, 31 March 1952.

¹²¹*The Torch*, 5 February 1952.

¹²²*Umthunywa*, 12 January 1952.

history lesson which, like Molema's addresses in Johannesburg and Mafikeng, countered Van Riebeeck's past by setting up categories of "African inhabitants" and "European invaders". He related the "wars against the indigenous peoples" to the need to supply passing ships from Europe, to make "White farmers wealthy" and to provide cheap labour for the "Europeans". Missionaries were singled out for their role that they played "in the conquest and subjugation of the Non-Whites". After these wars the Act of Union gave the "Europeans" political power by excluding the "Non-Europeans" and subsequently passing laws "against the Non-Europeans".¹²³

While the festival's past would not talk of race in these terms - its concern was the coming together of the 'white race' into a nation - there was more than just a brief correspondence between the history that Tsotsi was delivering and that of Van Riebeeck. To proclaim whites as being of European extraction, was as central to the Van Riebeeck festival as it was for Tsotsi. For the former it was the source the source of 'western civilization', while for the latter it was the basis for assertions of indigeneity, which 'western civilization' destroyed. Moreover, in both instances, it was the nation that was seen as bringing race to an end. Race was conceived of as pre-modern, to be eradicated by the coming together of the 'founder nations' under the aegis of Van Riebeeck, or through the "reason and principle" of the struggle against Van Riebeeck.¹²⁴

Whether 'reason and principle' was the motor force behind the stay away from the festival, there is little doubt that as these staged performances to counter Van Riebeeck increased in regularity, the boycott momentum gathered force. I D du Plessis' plans for the coloured and Malay day encountered even greater resistance as his own creation, the Malay Choir Board, contemplated withdrawing but were fearful that if they did so they would not be permitted to use the Cape Town City Hall for their competitions in the future.¹²⁵ By February 1952 more than half of the main Malay choirs, including the Celtics and the Boarding Boys, had

¹²³Umthunywa, 12 January 1952; *The Guardian*, 27 December 1951. For a further reports on Tsotsi's speech see *Natal Witness*, 17 December 1951 and *The Torch*, 24 December 1951.

¹²⁴Umthunywa, 12 January 1952.

¹²⁵*The Torch*, 12 February 1952.

spurned invitations to perform at the Van Riebeeck Stadium because of their "duty to the people" and by the end of March all of them had decided to withdraw. Two jazz bands from Johannesburg, the Manhattan Brothers and the Shantytown Sextet, turned down offers of £400 to perform.¹²⁶ The NAD which had decided to go ahead with its plans for a 'tribal village' at the festival fair, found that the costs were raised considerably as it had to bring in "Natives from distant parts" to perform the roles that had been assigned to them.¹²⁷ Details of the 'Bantoe-fees' in Langa had also been fleshed out to arouse interest. It was to include a programme of children's sporting activities in the morning, a free lunch for everyone, a soccer match in the afternoon and, in the evening, a "Native musical" and the showing of movies. Based upon its previous experience of promoting the festival in Langa, the NAD was hesitant about giving this programme its official sanction, but decided that it would award prizes for sports if the "Natives accept the invitation". In spite of all the offerings and incentives from the NAD, very few did and the proposed "celebration" on the playing fields of Langa did not transpire.¹²⁸

The printed history lessons

For all the gathering momentum of the boycott and its promotion on the political stage the opponents of the festival felt that to contest Van Riebeeck effectively it was the historical authority that derived from the printed word that needed to be challenged. In order to "totally reject the ... distortions and falsifications of history", it was, in the words of Dora Taylor (the author of *The Role of The Missionaries in Conquest* (1952)) essential to "undertake the task of re-writing history".¹²⁹ The Unity Movement, in particular, which was uneasy about mass political gatherings, asserted that writing and publishing history was a much more productive

¹²⁶*The Torch*, 9 October, 11 December 1951, 12 and 26 February 1952, 18 March 1952; *Cape Times*, 29 and 31 March 1952; Ntanatla, *A Life's Mosaic*, p.151.

¹²⁷Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary to the Treasury, 21 February 1952, CAD, TES 3973, F20/999/1. For an extensive account of the NAD display at the festival fair see chapter four.

¹²⁸Memo to Under Secretary Administration, NAD, from Wyatt Sampson, Liaison Officer, 12 November 1951, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400.

¹²⁹D Taylor, *The Role of The Missionaries in Conquest*, Cumberwood (1986) (Unity Movement History Series), first published by SOYA, Johannesburg (1952).

way of learning "lessons of the past". In written histories the "logical interpretation" and "direct quotation from, and numerous references to, old documents and diaries" gave the "point of view of the oppressed" more "of the truth" and "an honest beginning" than "slogans and mere speeches".¹³⁰

A series of anti-Van Riebeeck publications were produced to coincide with and contest the tercentenary, most prolifically by political activists associated with the Unity Movement. Apart from *Missionaries in Conquest* and the articles in *The Educational Journal* which have already been mentioned, there was *Three Hundred Years* by Hosea Jaffe, articles in *The Torch* by "Boycott", under the title "The True Story of Jan van Riebeeck", and a chronology of the "wars and laws against us" in the "Special Boycott Edition" of *The Torch*. There were other individuals and organisations who published articles that challenged Van Riebeeck's history. The Forum Club, an organisation that was created in the 1940s in Cape Town to encourage open critiques of the 'democratic movement', published a lecture that was given by Kenny Jordaan entitled "Jan van Riebeeck: His place in South African History". Between February and April 1952, *The Guardian* ran a historical series by the author of *Time Longer than Rope* and ex-member of the Communist Party, Eddie Roux, entitled "1652 - And all That". Finally, Patrick Duncan, a member of the British colonial service in Basutholand, who resigned his position to join the defiance campaign, writing under the pseudonym of "Melanchthon", specially compiled and published a pamphlet for the tercentenary, which sold for one penny, entitled "Three Centuries of Wrong".¹³¹

In very broad general terms these printed histories were all attempting to counter the official history of the festival. When Ciraj Rassool and I presented a paper on the Van Riebeeck festival to the *Myths, Monuments, and Museums: New Premises?* conference at the University of the Witwatersrand in 1992, we argued that an essential element of the histories that were

¹³⁰*The Torch*, 29 April 1952.

¹³¹Taylor, *The Role of The Missionaries* (1986); H Jaffe, *Three Hundred Years*, Cape Town (1952); *Torch*, 29 January-18 March 1952; *The Torch*, 1 April 1952; *The Educational Journal*, February/March - May/June 1951; K Jordaan, 'Jan van Riebeeck: His Place in South African History' in M Hommel (ed), *Contributions of Non-European Peoples to World Civilization*, Johannesburg (1988), originally published in *Discussion* (1952); E Roux, '1652 and All That', *The Guardian*, 14 February to 17 April 1952; Melanchthon, 'Three Centuries of Wrong', (1952), Karis and Carter Microfilm, Reel 15B, 2QV1:84/2; For extended discussion on the Forum Club see Rassool, 'Going Back to Our Roots', pp.25-8.

published in *The Guardian* and *The Torch* was an almost direct inversion of the historical representations of the festival. Sheik Yusuf, for instance, who was presented as an icon of Malay ethnic history by the festival organisers, was changed into a resister who believed in non-collaboration in the pages of *The Torch*. The bushmen who were depicted as wild and primitive in the festival fair became communal owners of land, artistic geniuses, inventive craftsmen and were re-named Batwa. Of course, the greatest inversion was reserved for Van Riebeeck who was described as a "mediocre surgeon" and a petty criminal, who had "left Batavia under a cloud".¹³²

We further argued that these reverse images from *The Torch* and *The Guardian* were replicating the poster from the 30 March meeting on the Grand Parade of an upside-down Van Riebeeck with a cross defacing its façade. What this seemed to indicate to us was that the point of departure of these published histories around the boycott was the same as that of the festival histories.

Van Riebeeck remained the shaper of the South African past, and conflicts were reduced to an assessment of his moral qualities and his legacy. The debate moved little beyond whether Van Riebeeck was saint or sinner, superhero or criminal.¹³³

Ironically, the outcome of this apparent conflict was consensus around the meaning of 'the landing', with Van Riebeeck coming to represent the genesis of apartheid by both the promoters of the festival and its opponents. As in most histories that are produced around festivals of colonial settlement, it is the narrative of the founder figure that remains the pivot of the story. The counter-histories may have inverted the festival's imagery, but they still reflected "the original image" and "the original text". The essentials of the story thus remain very similar, and, more often than not, they affirm the existence of a 'national past' around the moment of founding and conquest.¹³⁴

¹³²*The Guardian* 17 and 28 February 1952; *The Torch*, 29 January, 5 and 19 February 1952; Rassool and Witz, 'Constructing and Contesting', pp.465-6.

¹³³Rassool and Witz, 'Constructing and Contesting', p.466.

¹³⁴P Seed, 'On Caribbean Shores: Problems of Writing History of the First Contact', *Radical History Review*, 53 (1992), p.10; M Aveling, 'Not the Bicentennial History', *Australian Historical Studies*, 23, 91 (October 1988), p.162.

On the whole this argument still stands. Where it has to be revised is to take into account some of the complexities of the different oppositional histories. Roux's '1652 - And All That', for instance, although it does posit the arrival of Van Riebeeck as a turning point which established a social and economic system of slavery which "has coloured the minds of South African white men ever since", is careful to point out that Van Riebeeck's occupation of the Cape was incidental. Roux also claims that the initial form which slavery took at the Cape was mild when compared to plantation slavery in the West Indies, allowing for the emergence of craft industries among the enslaved. This leads into the central point of his series, that black South Africans have contributed in many ways to the development of the country and that this needs to be allowed to flourish by doing away with structures of racial segregation.¹³⁵ In presenting this thesis, '1652' is much the same as Roux's work *Time Longer Than Rope*, which was published four years earlier. Although *Time Longer than Rope* was the first major Africanist work in South Africa, in that it posited the centrality of the struggle of Africans for their rights, the narrative presented consistently speaks for the "black man" and 'his advancement' against the irrationality of race.¹³⁶ In '1652', as in *Time Longer than Rope*, race was presented as pre-modern, pre-enlightenment and its elimination as the pre-requisite for nation building, inadvertently coinciding with similar notions of race as pre-national that the festival publicised.

The Torch's "Boycott" was much more concerned than Roux to challenge the festival's images directly and to replace them with 'truths'. The "True Story of Van Riebeeck" was one of a "demoted, disgraced, sacked thief, begging and whining for a job", the "truth about Sheik Yusuf" was that he was regarded by the Dutch "as an evil man" whom they "banished ... to the Cape", the "Strandlopers" who encountered Van Riebeeck were "skilled fishermen, expert workers ... [who] made huts [and] played music" and "the Batwa ... were not less primitive than the old inhabitants of England or Holland".¹³⁷ In the new history that "Boycott"

¹³⁵E Roux, '1652', *The Guardian*, 14, 21, 28 February, 17 April 1952.

¹³⁶C Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class*, Cape Town (1988), p.134; P Lalu, 'Lived Texts, Written Texts and con-Texts: Eddie Roux and the Making of the South African Past', MA, University of the Western Cape (1994), pp.148-9.

¹³⁷*The Torch*, 5, 12, 19 February, 18 March 1952. From the similarity between this series and *Three Hundred Years* it would seem that "Boycott" was Hosea Jaffe.

presented, Sheik Yusuf, the Strandlopers and the Batwa became heroes of non-collaboration, who did not succumb to Van Riebeeck and his followers. Clearly the demarcation point between lies and truth lay along the same divide as that of participation and boycott. This was the mirror image of the festival's construction of the space of the authentic past as being located within the history of its pageantry and publications. Both "Boycott" and Van Riebeeck offered virtually no escape from this history-as-mirror, the former "only knowable through a necessarily false representation" of the latter, thus threatening "to reproduce the static, essentialist categories" it wished to contest.¹³⁸

The two lengthiest accounts that countered Van Riebeeck's history, by Jaffe and Taylor, also made a great deal of use of this inverted imagery.¹³⁹ Both books engaged with the historical depictions of the festival directly and represented "appropriately adversary ideological history".¹⁴⁰ In the case of *Missionaries*, the book was also a challenge to accounts by mission-educated Africans, particularly those were leading members of the ANC, such as Silas Molema, who had heaped inordinate amounts of praise on their teachers for bringing to "the Bantu, perhaps more than any other people", the 'light' of "civilisation, Christianity, and education". Far from being the bearers of light, Taylor argued, the missionaries had subjugated "the minds of the people" in order to ensure white domination. This was continuing through the maintenance of "an intellectual stranglehold over the leadership of the non-Europeans".¹⁴¹ This perhaps was the meaning of Taylor's challenge given that the Van Riebeeck festival, in its attempt to create a settler past, did not paint missionaries in an entirely glowing light and referred in the float procession to the "accusation" by the members of the London Missionary Society that the European settlers at the beginning of the nineteenth century "were ill-treating the Hottentots" as "entirely fictitious".¹⁴²

¹³⁸R Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, London (1995), p.5.

¹³⁹I do not intend going into the content of these books in detail as they have already been extensively dealt with by Saunders, *The Making*, ch.13; Rassool, 'Going Back to Our Roots'; and Nasson, 'The Unity Movement Tradition'.

¹⁴⁰Nasson, 'The Unity Movement Tradition', p.160

¹⁴¹S M Molema, *The Bantu Past and Present*, Edinburgh (1920), p.220.

¹⁴²*Official Festival Programme*, pp.108-9; *Cape Times*, 4 August 1951.

The other dominating feature of both these works is their almost obsessive tendency to cite from documentary sources and, particularly in the case of Jaffe, to ensure that these were referenced.¹⁴³ Within Unity Movement circles this was the cause of much debate over whether the authors had achieved the appropriate balance between facts and analysis. One reviewer complimented *Three Hundred Years* because it contained both a "wealth of interesting historical data", which indicated "fine historical draughtsmanship", and an "understanding and analysis which reveal the underlying social forces in the evolution of South African society". This was much more complimentary than A C Jordan's comment when he compared the two books. The "author [of *Missionaries in Conquest*]" he asserted, "puts forward a thesis and facts to prove it Facts and dates are used to support a thesis; unlike Mnguni [Jaffe], to whom dates and facts are ends in themselves".¹⁴⁴ Both critiques point to the way that in these works history and political action, derived from the analysis presented, are regarded as indivisible. Providing 'historical facts' in the authoritative published account was important in as much as they were the conveyers of political lessons. In Taylor's introduction, she saw the stripping away of racial myths as "the way to liberating ourselves", while Jaffe's exposition was written to create an understanding of "how to transform the status quo".¹⁴⁵ More than the historical characters and events that were presented in a sometimes mirror-like fashion, it is this insistence upon the indivisibility of history-as-facts and politics that challenged the Van Riebeeck festival, where the history (as 'objective fact') was supposedly removed from politics and where a 'political truce' was declared among the parliamentary parties for the three weeks of the festival to allow history to proceed through the streets of Cape Town unhindered. Taylor and Jaffe's histories made these processions into sites of political contestation. Subjecting this festival 'truce' to 'fact' and 'analysis' disputed the notion that South African history was about settlement and that politics was "between

¹⁴³Nasson, 'The Unity Movement Tradition', p.161 ; Saunders, *The Making*, p.137.

¹⁴⁴A F S, 'Book Review of *300 Years*', *The Educational Journal* (April 1952), p. 8; Quoted in letter from I B Tabata to Dora Taylor, 1 August 1953, quoted in C Rassool, 'Notes on Gender in the Making of Isaac Bangani Tabata', *Paradigms Lost, Paradigms Regained, Journal of Southern African Studies Conference*, York, September 1994. Thanks to Ciraj Rassool for permission to use this material.

¹⁴⁵Taylor, *Role of Missionaries*, 'Introduction'; Jaffe, *Three Hundred Years*, 'Introduction'.

Europeans", reserved for the descendants of the settlers and that "the non-Europeans would be well advised to leave the struggle to the Europeans".¹⁴⁶

It would be erroneous to place all the published challenges to Van Riebeeck in the category of mirroring and inverting the festival's imagery. Kenny Jordaan's published lecture, "Jan van Riebeeck: His Place", contested the historical paradigms of both the festival and its primary opponents by suggesting that Van Riebeeck had nothing to do with the structures of racial domination that existed in South Africa in the 1950s. He argued that it was the mining revolution of the 1870s that destroyed precapitalist societies and created a universal system of wage labour in the region which underpinned the "national enslavement of the non-Europeans".¹⁴⁷ This approach to South African history, which relied on Marxist theory together with documentary sources (he makes a great deal of use of Van Riebeeck's diary) and what Jordaan admitted was the work of "the conservative historian Theal", was an entirely novel one which went far beyond the inverted past. Perhaps it was precisely the very form that this publication took which enabled it to produce a past that did not fall easily into the mirror categories of the festival and its opponents. A lecture to a small discussion group, which was always going to be on the fringes of public terrain and hidden from its vista, was a safe place to present ideas that in many senses were beyond the mainstream of even academic history in South Africa at that stage. Here Jordaan was able to put forward his position for criticism and discussion to a small select audience. Those who were directly engaging Van Riebeeck in the public sphere, where "weighty political considerations" and convincing audiences to reject the festival were what mattered, could not make such bold, new, historical assertions.¹⁴⁸

In the context of the festival all these challenge in print, even when they mirrored the past that the organisers were attempting to portray, fundamentally contested the authority of the official historical depictions. The 1952 Van Riebeeck festival, although it placed great emphasis on visualising the past, always regarded the written word of history as providing the

¹⁴⁶*Cape Times*, 5 April 1952.

¹⁴⁷Jordaan, 'Jan van Riebeeck', p. 162.

¹⁴⁸Jordaan, 'Jan van Riebeeck', pp. 158, 137.

authentic basis of its historical productions. Apart from Van Riebeeck's diary (which was translated and edited by Prof Thom from Stellenbosch University to coincide with the tercentenary) a range of publications was produced. Many of these bore the official stamp of the Central Committee of the festival and found their way into school libraries. Herschel school, for instance, noted that among its library acquisitions for 1952 were *Our Three Centuries*, *Three Ships Came Sailing*, *The Old Company's Gardens* and *The Dromedaris: 300 Years*.¹⁴⁹ It could also have ordered *Drie Eeue* [Three Centuries], a five volume illustrated history, specially written for the "jeug van Suid-Afrika" [youth of South Africa] by D W Kruger, Anna Boeseken and A Kieser, *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika* by A J van der Watt, J A Widd and A L Geyer, and Maskew Miller's special set of publications for the tercentenary, *Overberg Outspan* by Edmund Burrows, *The Cape Peninsula*, edited by J A Mabbutt, and *First Ladies of the Cape* by Gwen Mills. Indeed, it was by defining and printing the word, the map and the picture, that gave the festival its sense of being history. A special exhibition was held at the South African Library, between 1 March and 5 April 1952, of books, atlases and maps in its holdings "in commemoration of the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck at the Cape".¹⁵⁰ Although in no way measuring up to the printed word of the festival, the plethora of historical material in newspapers, journals, books and pamphlets which spurned Van Riebeeck and his past was able, at least, to confront him and his family with the authority of the printed word in different histories when they landed at Granger Bay in 1952.

Yet, the networks of distribution, which were controlled by the major publishing houses - like Juta's, Maskew Miller Longman and Nasionale Pers - often working in conjunction with the government's education department, meant that many of these oppositional histories had a limited circulation. Very few copies of *Three Hundred Years* and *The Role of Missionaries*, for instance, were printed and they were unable to find their way into most school libraries. They seem to have been most widely circulated among teachers who had affiliations with the Unity Movement, and who used the books, sometimes surreptitiously, as the basis of their history lessons. Even then they found a limited readership as, to evade school inspectors and

¹⁴⁹*The Herschelien*, 27 (December 1952), p.12.

¹⁵⁰Book Exhibition Committee Van Riebeeck Festival, *South Africa in Print*, Cape Town (1952), front cover.

avoid disciplinary action from government officials, the books were hardly made accessible to students themselves.¹⁵¹ Thus, while the published oppositional histories could challenge the word of the festival's texts, the limited and highly regulated access to the channels of government and publishing power, effectively curtailed the ability of those who were producing material to counter Van Riebeeck to establish a sense of authority for the pasts they presented.

International opposition to Van Riebeeck: Dr White Anderson, the festival and "native problems".

Three weeks before the festival was due to begin, Van Riebeeck began to encounter opposition from another and quite unexpected quarter. In planning for his landing and taking up residence in the Castle, he had invited a few international guests to join him and Maria at a luncheon, consisting of soup, fish, mutton chops or roast beef or spring chicken or *bobotie* [curried hash], ice cream and coffee at their new home on 5 April 1952.¹⁵² These guests of the festival's Central Committee had been invited to give the celebration an aura of "international significance". This was not a broad invitation but focused on welcoming people from other countries which were "bound by traditional ties to South Africa". What constituted "traditional ties" was not entirely clear but did embrace what the festival counted as the 'founder nations' of settlement: Germany, France, Britain, Holland and even Portugal.¹⁵³ The committee also wanted to ensure that the visitors or their governments would raise no objections to coming to South Africa and would not criticise the South African government and its apartheid policies. The only official of stature who was invited was the Vice-President of the Council of State of the Netherlands, Beelaerts van Blockland. The rest of the individuals who were invited were very low-key: Dr Y M Goblet, a student of anthropogeography from France, Lt Col Gabler, a retired German Imperial Officer who had translated parts of Van Riebeeck's diary into German, Mrs L O'Dalaigh, the wife of the attorney general of Ireland, Gavin Astor, from *The Times* newspaper in London and Rev Dr

¹⁵¹Nasson, 'The Unity Movement', pp.157-9.

¹⁵²Van Riebeeck Festival: Luncheon in the Castle, 5 April 1952, UCT (ASL), McM.

¹⁵³Parliamentary Hansard, House of Assembly Debates, 8 February 1951, pp.906, 917.

White Anderson, the moderator of the Church of Scotland.¹⁵⁴ Unfortunately for Van Riebeeck, it was the last mentioned whose proposed visit to the shores of the Cape caused all the international controversy that he had studiously attempted to avoid, stirring up conflict and acrimony within the Church of Scotland.

White Anderson was invited to attend the Van Riebeeck festival by its Central Committee via the South African High Commission in London. Anderson told colleagues that the invitation was addressed to him in a personal capacity and that he was being asked "as an individual to represent Scotland".¹⁵⁵ He would have joined the official British delegation - Her Majesty's government was "very glad to be able to take part in these celebrations" - which, in addition to Astor from *The Times*, included those who were responsible for setting up the United Kingdom display at the festival fair and two military officials.¹⁵⁶ Anderson accepted the invitation with almost alarming alacrity, and wrote to members of the Church of Scotland's mission in South Africa informing them of his impending visit. He claimed that, in response, he "received a number of letters from South Africans and all encouraged him to go and welcomed him".¹⁵⁷ As part of his trip he was invited to visit the mission stations and "the Bantu [Presbyterian] Church"¹⁵⁸, which he readily included on his itinerary.

Anderson appears to have officially informed the Church of Scotland neither of the invitation nor of his acceptance but it soon became the subject of public gossip.

It was a British-origin South African who first told Miss Morrison of the visit - she wouldn't believe him at first - and he told her that it was the subject of derisive comments from some of his associates as to the ease with which the Nationalists had secured a capture.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴*Cape Argus and Die Burger*, 27 March 1952; 'Van Riebeeck Festival - Guest Pavilion, 30 March - 6 April 1952', UCT (ASL), McM.

¹⁵⁵Charles Smith to Rev Shepherd, 9 March 1952, Cory, MS 14,727; *Official Festival Programme*, p.99.

¹⁵⁶Hansard, British House of Commons, 497 H.C. DEB. 5s, 3-21 March 1952, p.647; 'Van Riebeeck Festival - Guest Pavilion'.

¹⁵⁷*The Scotsman*, 5 March 1952.

¹⁵⁸Charles Smith to Rev Shepherd, 9 March 1952, Cory, MS 14,727.

¹⁵⁹Charles Smith to Rev Shepherd, 9 March 1952, Cory, MS 14,727.

In these somewhat vaguely defined circuits of rumour and gossip the lines of debate over the invitation were constituted. Soon Dr Anderson began receiving letters asking him to reverse his decision, from students whom he variously characterised as from "New College and ... Trinity College, Glasgow", "African" - on the basis of their "wording" - "non-Christian" and "indeed ... communists".¹⁶⁰ To varying degrees these all suggested a lack of authority and substance to the assertions being made. Members of the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland who were opposed to the visit established their credentials along similar lines. Letters from theologians in Nyasaland, Gold Coast and Nigeria were cited to provide evidence of African opposition to the journey to Van Riebeeck's festival. The words of these 'African ministers' was substantiated on the basis of mathematical considerations - the "enormous populations of tropical Africa" to whom they preached - and the description of their evangelisation as "well-balanced", "sound" and containing "Christian common-sense".¹⁶¹

Not only was it necessary to assert representivity on the basis of the 'African word' but the meaning of Van Riebeeck as a representative figure of a past that the festival sought to portray was also of fundamental importance in the competing assertions being debated among members of the Church of Scotland. At a meeting of the Presbytery of Edinburgh on 4 March 1952 Anderson, whom opponents described in private correspondence as "a foolish sort of fellow" who "says and does things forgetful of his representative position",¹⁶² was hauled over the coals by the Foreign Mission Committee. Their central concern, as it was expressed by the chair of the committee, Rev J A Bremner, was that the Moderator's tour might be misinterpreted as condoning the racial policies of the South African government which the Church of Scotland had criticised in 1949 as being contrary to the "teaching and tenets of the Christian faith". Van Riebeeck's landing, which was being commemorated by the festival, Bremner asserted, had laid the course for apartheid by choosing that "the relationship between themselves and the native populations be that of masters and slaves". Although, as Bremner recognised, slavery had been officially abolished at the Cape in the early nineteenth century,

¹⁶⁰*The Scotsman*, 5 March 1952; Rev Andersen to Dr Kerr, 27 March 1952, Cory, MS 14,727.

¹⁶¹*The Scotsman*, 5 March 1952; Charles Smith to Rev Shepherd, 24 March 1952, MS 14,727.

¹⁶²Charles Smith to Rev Shepherd, 9 March 1952, Cory, MS 14,727.

"the policy of racial discrimination" was, for him, a logical outflow of a system that Van Riebeeck - referred to as being among a group of "Dutch colonists" - had introduced.¹⁶³

Anderson, in response, expressed himself as being unconcerned about the issue of representation, claiming that whether or not the South African government had decided to commemorate "the 300th anniversary", they would have been subject to a barrage of negative criticism. Once again, it was part of the 'non-Christian' world, the "powers all over Asia", that he singled out as the source of condemnation. Yet, in spite of his expressed lack of apprehension over the way his visit would be interpreted and his dismissal of such matters as emanating from the realm of the 'non-European', he did attempt, in passing, to put forward a history where Van Riebeeck was not the originator of the master/slave lineage. The festival, Anderson maintained, was "perfectly legitimate" as Van Riebeeck was "not opposed to the African people and advocated inter-marriage".¹⁶⁴ This image of Van Riebeeck as the founder of a 'multi-racial' South Africa was hardly one which coincided with the festival's intentions of promoting a South African nation based upon European settlement, although Van Riebeeck's promoters did praise him for bringing slaves into the Christian church.¹⁶⁵ This fitted in more closely with Anderson's touring itinerary, providing a historical basis for going to the festival as part of a missionary enterprise, "to work with them to the highest ends", that perhaps was seen to have started in 1652.¹⁶⁶

Indeed, it was this image of the festival as a vehicle for missionary work with a past that associated the Church of Scotland with Van Riebeeck that became a rallying point for the supporters of Anderson's visit, particularly from missionaries in South Africa. As already indicated the South African tour was presented as an opportunity to visit mission stations and provide a "spiritual stimulus" to the "Bantu Presbyterian Church". The "worthy, pious" Van Riebeeck was proclaimed to be the initiator of evangelical work in South Africa by members of the Presbyterian mission, even though he did this in a way that was neither "serious" nor

¹⁶³*The Scotsman*, 5 March 1952.

¹⁶⁴*The Scotsman*, 5 March 1952; *Cape Times*, 6 March 1952.

¹⁶⁵*Die Transvaler se Van Riebeeck Bylaag*, 4 April 1952.

¹⁶⁶*The Scotsman*, 5 March 1952.

"considered".¹⁶⁷ But even more than this, the visit was cast as contributing to the development of the Dutch Reformed Church by helping to "wean" it "from its old isolation".¹⁶⁸ The Church of Scotland was portrayed as most appropriate to perform this task because it was presented by proponents of the visit as "stemming ... from a common source" as the DRC.¹⁶⁹ This commonality was dated back to the seventeenth century, when, according to the official history of the DRC published to coincide with the festival, Jan van Riebeeck began "*die geskiedenis van die Kerk in ons land*" [the history of the Church in our land]. Van Riebeeck, claimed the DRC, was the founder of Christianity, Protestant Christianity, Reformed Protestant Christianity and, in the fort which he built, the first Dutch Reformed Church in Africa.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, in the mid-nineteenth century, ministers like Andrew Murray had been recruited from Scotland by the DRC and they had "left many descendants among the best of the Dutch people". There was even a float in the festival pageant that was presented by the Cape Town Caledonian Society, which depicted the arrival in Table Bay of Murray and other ministers and teachers from Scotland in 1822. Although since the 1820s connections between the DRC and the Church of Scotland had been tenuous, the advocates of Anderson's visit saw the festival as an ideal opportunity to reestablish those links and help draw the Dutch Reformed Church "into the wider fellowship of Christendom".¹⁷¹ In these terms, the invitation that was issued to Anderson by the festival committee, which was chaired by the moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, A J van der Merwe, was construed as an attempt to show the deep gratitude and "old indebtedness" that the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa had towards the Church of Scotland.¹⁷²

All these claims to various pasts that arose out of Anderson's proposed visit to the festival in some way associated Van Riebeeck with a South African nation that was deeply bound to

¹⁶⁷*The South African Outlook*, 1 April 1952, p.50.

¹⁶⁸*The Scotsman*, 17 March 1952.

¹⁶⁹*Cape Times*, 4 April 1952.

¹⁷⁰P L Olivier, *Ons Gemeentlike Feesalbum*, Cape Town (1952), p.9; Van Riebeeckfeeskomitee van die N G Kerk, *Ons Bou 'n Nasie: Feesboodskap van ons Kerk en Volk*, Cape Town (1952), pp.5-7.

¹⁷¹*The Scotsman*, 17 March 1952: *Official Festival Programme*, p.108.

¹⁷²R H W Shepherd, 'The Moderator's Visit to South Africa: A Personal View', nd, Cory, MS 14,727.

the missionary enterprise as the motor force of progress. In this 'missionary complex' it was the representation of the African word that was constituted as the key to evaluating contesting claims to political legitimacy. With a "Liability to Misinterpretation"¹⁷³ ever present in debates over the visit, the very brief histories that were produced by the claimants constructed South African pasts as evidence to substantiate the African voices that were evoked. The link between Anderson's visit, the political intentions of the festival and history was made much more explicit, though, by the opponents of the tour as they sought to convince him and other members of the Church of Scotland that he should not join Van Riebeeck at the Cape in 1952. They pointed to the plans of the ANC to "stage passive resistance to the racial policy of the South African Government" as an indication of how the local African population was rejecting the interpretation of the South African past being proffered by the festival organisers.¹⁷⁴ Those in favour of the visit expressed themselves as being less concerned with interpretation and, through the voice of "two non-Europeans" - the son of Mahatma Gandhi and one of the "leading ... wisest Africans", the session clerk at Lovedale mission - dissociated Van Riebeeck from politics and placed him in a 'neutral' and 'objective' category labelled as "a historical event".¹⁷⁵ This was precisely the same dichotomy between history and politics upon which the organisers of the Van Riebeeck festival drew for their authority and which opponents challenged to dispute the staged past. Anderson, feeling that he was unable to deal with all these "native problems"¹⁷⁶ - a reference to both Van Riebeeck's adversaries and those who exalted his coming - decided to cancel his visit to the festival and was not able to partake of roast beef, ice-cream and coffee at Van Riebeeck's table on 5 April.

¹⁷³*The Scotsman*, 5 March 1952.

¹⁷⁴*The Scotsman*, 5 March 1952.

¹⁷⁵Shepherd, 'The Moderator's Visit'.

¹⁷⁶*The Scotsman*, 5 March 1952.

"Wat Dink die Bantoe van die Fees?" [What do the Bantu Think of the Festival?]¹⁷⁷

Unlike the organisation of Van Riebeeck's festival which coalesced into a series of official committees, those who contested his past and the representations of it arose from a variety of individuals and organisations, took various forms and decided not to participate for markedly differing reasons. Yet, for all these differences, there was an overwhelming stay-away from the events of the Van Riebeeck festival by those who were racially termed 'non-European'. The 'day of the Malay and the coloured' was turned into a Malay and Griqua pageant as Du Plessis scrounged around looking for participants. Very few coloureds attended the festival fair - indeed there were no 'non-Europeans' on the first two days when it opened - and only a few 'natives from Langa' who were curious about the goings on at the foreshore went to the visit the festival.¹⁷⁸

This widespread rejection of the festival by 'the non-European' did not go unnoticed by the promoters of the tercentenary who continually tried to convince "*die Bantoe*" [the Bantu] to bring "*hulde ... aan Van Riebeeck*" [homage to Van Riebeeck]. In the Afrikaans magazine, *Die Huisgenoot*, an article was published by E L Ntloedibe entitled, "*Wat dink die Bantoe van die Fees?*" [What do the Bantu think of the festival?]. This article, which the editor of *Die Huisgenoot* was keen to assure readers was completely unsolicited, argued that the arrival of Europeans at the Cape had put an end to barbarism in South Africa, that the Great Trek had eliminated 'tribal fighting' and that whites had defeated 'Bantu imperialism'. All these 'welcome' events, the writer (whoever he or she was) maintained, were a result of keeping the races separate, and showed that the "*enigste oplossing van die naturelle-vraagstuk*" [only solution to the native question] was a policy of "*algehele segregasie*" [total segregation]. For all these reasons, and because Van Riebeeck brought "*beskawing in donker Afrika*"

¹⁷⁷*Die Huisgenoot*, 11 April 1952.

¹⁷⁸Interview with M S "Cappy" Ndlumbini, conducted by Rochidi Molapo in Langa, 22 January 1994. Thanks to Rochidi Molapo for giving me access to his interviews. For attendance at the festival fair see chapter four.

[civilisation to darkest Africa], Ntloedibe concluded that 'the Bantu' should reject the calls not to celebrate the festival.¹⁷⁹

In spite of the claim for representativeness in the article, where one unknown person's opinion becomes that of all 'the Bantu', and despite the apparent authentication of the report as genuine because supposedly it was being reproduced "*onverandered*" [unchanged],¹⁸⁰ there seems little doubt that Ntloedibe's call went unheeded, given the small numbers in the segregated section of the festival stadium and the official statistics from the festival fair that a 90-95% boycott of the celebrations by 'non-Europeans'.¹⁸¹ Phyllis Ntantala, who spoke at the meeting of the Grand Parade on 30 April, enthused, "[t]he people were not there. What a flop for the government that had put up this show! What a success for the people's boycott!"¹⁸²

Whether, as Hosea Jaffe asserted, the boycott of the festival by "Non-Europeans" was an indication that after 300 years the conquered "had become metamorphosed into potential liberators"¹⁸³ is debatable. I B Tabata made similar claims to Jaffe:

Here for the first time all the Non-European sections had the opportunity of applying the boycott simultaneously. It gave them a feeling of solidarity. Throughout this whole period each one was keenly concerned with what his neighbour was doing; each group was deeply interested in the actions of the other. They felt that they were acting with a common purpose. Here was unity in fact. There was a common joy in the feeling that for once they had asserted their independence as a people.¹⁸⁴

Yet both the independence and the unity in the boycott that Jaffe and Tabata perceived, were partially illusory. Despite the apparent gulf between the pasts that were being projected by those advocating a stay-away and the pasts proclaimed by the festival, the distance between

¹⁷⁹*Die Huisgenoot*, 11 April 1952.

¹⁸⁰*Die Huisgenoot*, 11 April 1952.

¹⁸¹Jaffe, *Three Hundred Years*, p.176; *The Torch*, 8 April 1952.

¹⁸²Ntantala, *Life's Mosaic*, p.152.

¹⁸³Jaffe, *Three Hundred Years*, p.176.

¹⁸⁴M Temba (I B Tabata), 'Boycott as Weapon of Struggle', in Hommel (ed), *Contributions of Non-European Peoples*, pp.197-8.

them was, in some respects, not so great. The mirroring and inversion of the settler past, deriving authenticity from the printed word, using categories of European and non-European and conceptualising race as pre-modern all seem to indicate that there was an unspoken meeting between these different histories and that, to a certain extent, they depended upon each other. Moreover, the unity that Jaffe and Tabata proclaimed, was sometimes no more than skin deep as, at the level of political organisation, the struggles and divisions which had gone into mounting the boycott campaign were still very much in evidence. The Unity Movement and the ANC were scathing about each other's performance. The ANC-aligned *Guardian* questioned whether boycotting in itself was effective in terms of mobilising "the masses". "Will we have to wait another 100 years before we have the opportunity to see Messrs. Kies, Gool and Co. in action again?" asked the editor. The "Kahn, Moroka, Dadoo comedy on 6 April", replied the editor of the Unity Movement organ, *The Torch*, was "much ado ... about nothing".¹⁸⁵ Even more apparent was that although Tabata claimed that Van Riebeeck ironically had provided the "lever to the consciousness of the people in their struggle for liberation", the stay-away was not always tied to principled political action. Many were plainly disinterested, "they did not care about such celebrations," some thought that the event had nothing to do with them and others were asserting a status as a racial and/or educated elite, "enlightened people" who were not prepared to go and sing and dance for Van Riebeeck.¹⁸⁶

But whatever the reason for staying away from the foreshore and the events of the tercentenary there was little doubt that the festival had not managed to persuade the 'non-Europeans' to receive and accept Van Riebeeck's racial alibi that he was bringing 'western civilisation' to the shores of 'darkest Africa'. This rejection was most aptly expressed in the pages of *Drum* magazine:

The year 1952 has seen a change. When the ruling elements said that the celebrations were essentially theirs, but that they would like the non-whites to take part, the reply was an emphatic "Voetsak!" which in the Afrikaner

¹⁸⁵*The Guardian*, 10 April 1952; *The Torch*, 15 April 1952.

¹⁸⁶Interviews by Rochidi Molapo with: Thami Mgijima, Langa, 23 January 1994 and Constance Macozoma, Langa, 5 September 1993.

language is usually taken to mean "Go away you rascal dog, I don't like you."¹⁸⁷

"The boomerang [had] struck back!"¹⁸⁸ and while Van Riebeeck had successfully managed to persuade and convey thousands of 'Europeans' to witness his progression from Granger Bay through the streets of Cape Town and into the Castle, he was unable to entice the 'non-Europeans' to partake of his segregated and separate offerings. There were "*geen Kleuringkinders om te sing en dans nie, geen Kleurling voorstellings of kore nie*" [no coloured children to sing and dance, no coloured performances or choirs] bemoaned *Die Burger*. There were only the Griqua, I D du Plessis' Cape Malays and a forlorn Sheik Yusuf who landed at the lonely, desolate Cape on 2 April 1952.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷*Drum*, June 1952.

¹⁸⁸*Drum*, June 1952.

¹⁸⁹*Die Burger*, 10 April 1952.

CHAPTER FOUR
"'N FEES VIR DIE OOG" [A FESTIVAL/FEAST
FOR THE EYE]: LOOKING IN ON THE 1952
JAN VAN RIEBEECK TERCENTENARY
FESTIVAL FAIR.

The 1952 Jan van Riebeeck festival was planned as a visual extravaganza, a "*skouspel*" [spectacle] more than a "*belewenis*" [experience].¹ There were few speeches, leaving as much time as possible for the crowds to take in the constant array of sights and to be "dazzled" by the "huge canvas".² The processions in the streets of Cape Town, the various displays in the festival stadium, the exhibitions in galleries and museums and the plays at the drama festival, like all the scenes at the festival, were intended to be "'n fees vir die oog" [a festival/feast for the eye].³

For those who could not make it to Cape Town, this visual production could be followed in the local movie theatre while waiting to see either Alec Guinness in that "Grand Comedy", *Man in the White Suit* or Ivor Novello's "Wonder Technicolour Musical", *The Dancing Years*.⁴ Almost on a weekly basis, through the documentary newsreels *African Mirror*, *Ons Nuus* and *British Movietone News*, a "voice-of-God" commentator took movie-goers to the Van Riebeeck celebrations. With the help of sound and musical effects drawn from a limited repertoire in the respective audio library, his commentary "mov[ed] the text forward" from the initial "*voorbereidings*" [preparations] for the festival in the latter months of 1951, to the arrival of Henry Moore's sculptures for display at the South African National Gallery and

¹P H Kapp, *Ons Volksfeeste*, Cape Town (1975), p.121.

²*African Mirror*, no 647, 19 November 1951, NFA, FA 2511.

³*Die Burger*, 9 April 1952.

⁴*Cape Times*, 5 March 1952.

onto the beach at Granger Bay on 5 April 1952 when a group of Griqua, acting as strandlopers armed with bows and arrows, submitted to Jan van Riebeeck.⁵

As was seen in chapter two, the central figure in this lavishly illustrated history was intended, by the festival organisers, to be Jan van Riebeeck. Although the content of 'his story' was always negotiable, it was planned that he and his landing were to become the pivot on which the story of South Africa would turn. In *Our 300 Years*, the pictorial history of South Africa commissioned by the Central Committee of the Van Riebeeck festival and compiled by Victor de Kock of the Cape archives (with the assistance of the professors of history at the universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town), the pictures told a story which began at the Cape of Good Hope which in 1652, except for a few "impoverished, famine-stricken, half-naked ... savages" had "no inhabitants". That all changed on 6 April when "in calm weather, a sail hove into sight. This was the glimpse of a small ship called the *Dromedaris*".⁶ In the newsreels as well, the landing was afforded pride of place. The Movietone News report on the festival started with the "realistic" landing of Van Riebeeck at Granger Bay and was "followed [by] a mile long procession of floats through the streets of the city".⁷ Even a wooden replica of Van Riebeeck's statue, sprayed with sand to "give it the appearance of stone",⁸ had to be made so as to place him at the centre of the festival proceedings on Cape Town's foreshore rather than on the periphery at the end of Adderley Street, where he had stood since 1899.

For the approximate one million people who witnessed part of the spectacle in Cape Town, though, it was not Van Riebeeck who caught their attention. They were much more excited by visiting the specially constructed festival fair on the foreshore where they could look at

⁵B Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bloomington (1991), pp.12-3; A small selection of these newsreels dealing with the Van Riebeeck festival are *Ons Nuus*, no 5, 22 August 1951; no 16, 7 November 1951; no 31, 20 February 1952; no 35, 19 March 1952; no 38, 9 April 1952; *African Mirror* no 637, 10 September 1951, FA 2558; no 647, 19 November 1951, FA 2511; no. 658, 4 February 1952, FA 2580; 24 March 1952, FA 2624; *British Movietone News*, April 1952, FA 747, all in National Film Archives, Pretoria.

⁶V de Kock, *Our Three Centuries*, Cape Town (1952), pp.23-4.

⁷British Movietone News, April 1952, NFA, FA 747.

⁸*Cape Times*, 4 August 1951.

some of the over 700 exhibits on display, take in experiences of an English and Dutch village, stare at 'tribal natives', and then go for a ride in a moon rocket at the amusement park.

I went to the Festival on Monday for the whole day. I saw the gold-mining industry, the S.A.R [South African Railways], the diamonds and Culemborg. After that I had lunch, and then I saw the Bushmen, the Natives, the dogs, the U.D.F. [Union Defence Force], and a Native weaving. I went down the gold mine and it was wonderful. The dogs did clever tricks. I liked John Cobb's racing car. I enjoyed everything so much that I would have spent every day of my holidays at the Festival.⁹

It was these sights at the fair, which people patiently waited in queues to experience and travelled the dangerous national road from Bellville to see¹⁰, that very nearly overshadowed Van Riebeeck.

Like the visitors to Cape Town in 1952, this chapter looks in at the Van Riebeeck festival fair and examines it in the context of the plans for the festival as a whole. It takes as its starting point the premise that the fair is what Fiske has called, a "producerly text". Drawing upon the distinction which Barthes makes between a "readerly text", where the reader is invited to accept the intended meaning, and a "writerly text", which is never fixed and is open to being rewritten by the reader, Fiske defines the "producerly text" as one which, while signifying meaning, does not dictate the rules of reading/writing.¹¹

Rather it offers itself up to popular production; it exposes, however reluctantly, the vulnerabilities, limitations, and weaknesses of its preferred meanings; it contains, while attempting to repress them, voices that contradict the one it prefers; it has loose ends that escape its control, its meanings exceed its own power to discipline them, its gaps are wide enough for whole new texts to be produced in them - it is, in a very real sense, beyond its control.¹²

⁹Julian Sandler, 'The Festival', *Rondebosch Boys' High School Magazine*, xlvii, 149 (June 1952), p.38.

¹⁰*Byvoegesel tot Die Burger*, 8 March 1952.

¹¹J Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, Boston (1988), pp.103-4. Barthes' dichotomy of readerly and writerly texts (*S/Z*, pp.3-6), is paralleled by Umberto Eco's use of closed and open texts. In a closed text "the reader supplies little to organize the text", while open text "makes more complex demands upon the reader [and] is seen differently by different readers at different times", R R Smith, 'Semiotics and Communication Theory', *Journal of Communication*, vol 30 (Winter 1980), p.205.

¹²Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, p.104.

In this sense the visitors to the Van Riebeeck festival fair were producers of their own images, meanings and texts, unlike in the pageantry where the audiences were largely - although not entirely - cast as receptors. An examination of the fair therefore needs to highlight the intentions, workings and deeper structures of the text, as well as the "productivity" of the participant viewers in their verbal enunciations and their textual productions.¹³ Using the publicity material produced for the festival, minutes, letters and memoranda of planning committees, newspaper, radio and film reports, writings in high school year books and interviews with visitors, this chapter attempts to take the reader to the fair, look behind the scenes at its construction and gaze at some of the exhibits and the productions of people who visited "*die skou van die jaar*" [the show of the year].¹⁴

The plans and the chaos

The Van Riebeeck festival fair, opened on 13 March 1952 by the Governor General, E G Jansen and the Minister of Economic Affairs, Eric Louw, was officially proclaimed as Africa's version of the Crystal Palace Empire Exhibition held in London in 1851. Heralded as the initiator of a new era in the world economy which would be influenced by the "*ondernemingsgees en rykdom van Afrika*" [entrepreneurship and wealth of Africa], the fair was devised to display "a complete panorama of South Africa's economic development".¹⁵

The fair was carefully planned to launch the second phase of the festival and to provide the central link in a continuum of events in Cape Town. The festivities in Cape Town were designed to start on 1 February with a series of sporting and cultural events in the festival's two main arenas. In the specially constructed 50 000 seater Van Riebeeck festival stadium on the foreshore, the highlight was to be South African Athletic Championships in which the

¹³Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, p.105; J Fiske, 'The Cultural Economy of Fandom', in L A Lewis (ed), *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, London (1992), pp.37-9.

¹⁴Basie Hanekom interviews W A de Klerk about the Festival Fair, *Feesplakboek II*, SABC, 19/5-7 (52).

¹⁵Opening of Van Riebeeck Festival Fair by E G Jansen, 13 March 1952, SABC, 19/62-5 (52); *Official Guide Book and Catalogue of the Van Riebeeck Festival Fair*, Cape Town (1952), p.25.

Dutch athletic aces Fanny Blankers-Koen and Willie Slykhuis would participate.¹⁶ At the Castle, Cape Town's "oldest and most memorable building", which linked "the present with the distant past when the foundations of the European civilization were laid in South Africa", seven Van Riebeeck family portraits sent by the Dutch government were to be displayed at the "[c]entrepiece of the historic art exhibitions".¹⁷ A month and a half later the focus was to shift from sport and culture to "material development", as the halls of the festival fair were to open their doors to reveal "the entire range of [South Africa's] industry, agriculture and commerce".¹⁸ Finally, at the beginning of April, Van Riebeeck would land, bringing with him his family and 'civilisation' to southern Africa.

But, while these arrangements were carefully mapped out, it was very difficult for the festival organisers to establish a "watertight system of hegemonic control".¹⁹ Whereas some museums can and do attempt to close meaning in exhibitions through their "institutionalised setting" where objects are often untouchable, a "religious silence" is imposed and conventional methods of labelling and classification are used, in a festival, where the aim is to encourage inclusive participation through "acting, tasting, or feeling, in addition to looking" such closure becomes increasingly difficult.²⁰ The almost utopian notion of inclusivity contained in the festival is more than likely to "engender pariahs" and raise the spectre of its exclusive nature, leading to non-participation by those whom the festival is seen to marginalise.²¹ For those who do come to the festival, on the other hand, the setting is not a "restrained and sensually restricted experience", and the audience is at times actively encouraged to involve itself in the

¹⁶*Official Festival Programme*, p.41.

¹⁷*Official Festival Programme*, p.23; *Het Kasteel De Goede Hoop*, guide book for visitors to the Castle, Cape Town (n.d), p.5.

¹⁸*Official Festival Programme*, pp.41, 23, 51, 81-9.

¹⁹D Ley and K Olds, 'Landscape as Spectacle: World's Fairs and the Culture of Heroic Consumption', *Society and Space*, 6 (1988), p.194.

²⁰P Davison, 'Material Culture, Context and Meaning: A Critical Investigation of Museum Practice, with Particular Reference to the South African Museum', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cape Town (1991), pp.171-2; P Bourdieu and A Darbel, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, Cambridge (1991), p.112; I Karp, 'Festivals' in I Karp and S D Lavine (eds), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Displays*, Washington (1991), p.282.

²¹M Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1988), p.11.

exhibits.²² Some of the first scenes of the festival in Cape Town, for instance, took place almost incidentally at an unplanned venue - the railway station. Throughout March and April 1952, the platforms were congested with a deluge of people. All main-line trains arriving at the station were fully booked with visitors to the festival. An additional twenty-five trains had to be laid on to convey "10, 000 students, teachers, choristers, folk dancers, Voortrekkers and first aid groups".²³ The following scenes, constructed from contemporary reports and featuring the crowds that had gathered there, portray some of the disarray on the station's platforms in March 1952.

Cape Town railway station, 6 March 1952. Crowds have gathered on platform 14. They are there to greet 11 "burly" white men who are travelling back to the Transvaal, after spending six months in Britain and France. When their boat had docked in Cape Town earlier in the day, Jan van Riebeeck had alighted from his pedestal to greet the men, and offered them his place, for the day, at the foot of Adderley street. Now, as they arrive to board the train that will take them to their homes, they are mobbed by the crowd. Cameras flash, hands reach out to touch, and autograph books are thrust in front of them. They have difficulty shoving and jostling their way to their compartments. Their luggage has to be passed over the heads of the crowd. Amidst scenes of jubilation the train departs. This is "a Jan van Riebeeck welcome home" for members of the victorious South African touring rugby team (see illustration 9).²⁴

Cape Town station, 7 March 1952. A crowd of people is waiting in anticipation on the platform. They are held at bay by railway police. A train draws in. In one carriage the blinds are drawn to shield the occupants "from the curious stares of onlookers". As the train draws to a halt the occupants of the carriage disembark and huddle together nervously on the platform. A man, who appears to be in charge of the group, organises an impromptu press conference. He informs journalists that there was an initial reluctance by the group to come to Cape Town, "but when we told them it would mean new blankets and plenty of food and tobacco we had plenty of volunteers". The twelve people appear frightened in their surroundings. The man in charge gathers them for a photo session and they barely raise a smile. And they keep quiet. Those who were hoping to see and hear more are disappointed. They must wait in the queues at the Van Riebeeck festival fair on the foreshore where the bushmen from South West Africa will be on display for the next

²²Karp, 'Festivals', p.281.

²³Report of the General Manager of Railways and Harbours for the Year Ended 31 March 1952, UG 51/1952, p.22.

²⁴This is based on reports and cartoons in the *Cape Times* on 6 and 7 March 1952 and *Die Burger* of the same days.

three weeks under the supervision of a professor of anthropology and now game warden at Etosha Pan reserve, P J Schoeman.²⁵

Cape Town station at the end of March 1952. The platform is crowded with exhausted and grumbling schoolchildren who have just arrived on a special train. From Cape Town they catch another train to Rosebank. From there it is a two-mile walk to their camp at the Rosebank showgrounds. The railways staff refuse to deliver the luggage to their tents. A heated argument ensues between the railways staff and the masters in charge. Eventually the luggage gets delivered to the tents. When the children arrive at the tents, they see that they are on a slope allowing the rain to seep in underneath. The mattresses, filled only with straw, are hard and rocky. This will be home for the next week for twenty schoolchildren from Selborne Primary in East London, as they spend their time looking at the various exhibitions at the Van Riebeeck festival fair.²⁶

The chaos at Cape Town station highlighted the tension between the management and control which the organisers attempted to impose on the one hand and the participation it wanted to encourage on the other. Space was almost continually breached, control over the presentation became increasingly limited and displays at times took on different meanings. The festival could not be totally controlled within the parameters for participation set down by its organisers, located at prescribed sites and defined as manageable activities.

At the Van Riebeeck festival there was both a large stay-away and a distinct lack of singular direction among the various participants. As has been shown in chapter three, there was a large 'non-European' stay-away from the festival, despite attempts by the president of the conservative Coloured People's National Union, G Golding, to counter this campaign by organising expeditions for groups of coloured schoolchildren to see the "educational exhibits at the fair".²⁷ At the festival itself, the large number of seemingly disparate exhibitions in different forms and venues and the organisers' insistence that displays not be "like a museum",²⁸ led, at times, to "messy events and disorderly, disputatious performances"²⁹ instead

²⁵This is based on reports in the *Cape Argus* on 7 March 1952 and the *Cape Times* on 8 March 1952.

²⁶Based on an essay by T Hughes and E Atkinson (Std 5), 'Beautiful Models at the Van Riebeeck Festival', *The Beehive*, Selborne Primary School, 2, 1, East London (1952), p.7.

²⁷*Cape Times*, 10 April 1952.

²⁸A J H Goodwin, 'The Van Riebeeck Festival Fair: Archaeology and Human Palaeontology', *South African Archaeological Bulletin*, vi, 25 (March 1952), p.53.

A Van Riebeeck Welcome Home

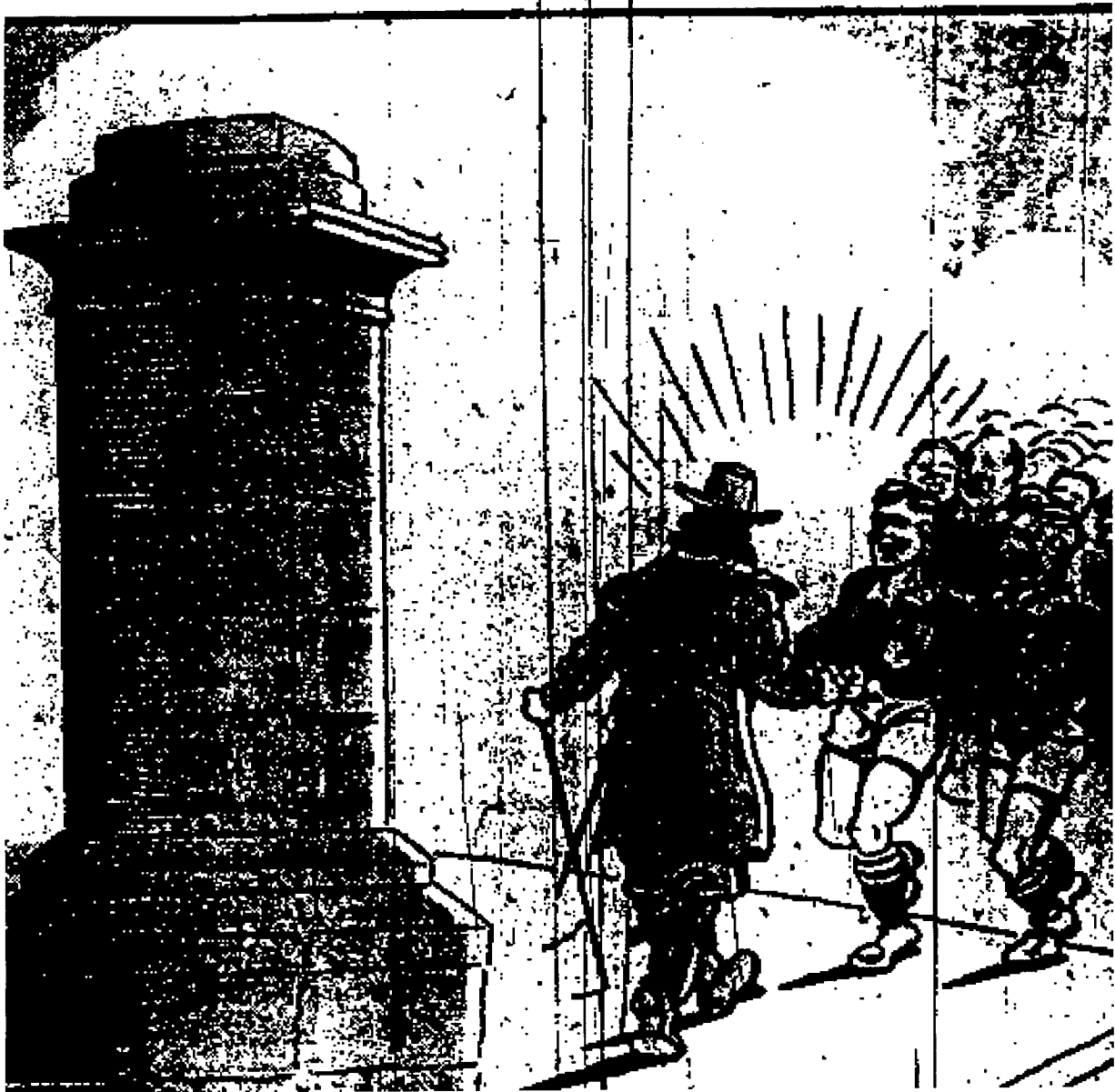


Figure 9: "A Van Riebeeck Welcome Home", *Cape Times*, 6 March 1952.

of focusing attention on Van Riebeeck as a national symbol of white settlement. Special botanical arrangements at the station were trampled underfoot and pot plants stolen.³⁰ The column with a replica of the Van Riebeeck statue on top of it - where the wreaths were to be laid in a sacred ceremony - was jokingly referred to by festival goers as Jan van Niekerk.³¹ The schoolboys from East London "were all glad when the time came to go home", after a week spent in a tent at the Rosebank showgrounds, which Cape Town's Medical Officer of Health had very nearly declared to be unsuitable for human habitation because the insanitary conditions, exacerbated by "[t]he presence of flies and fly breeding" at the horse stables, could lead to outbreaks of "dysentery, typhoid and gastro-enteritis".³²

This is not to deny that Jan van Riebeeck became the lead actor on South Africa's public history stage from 1952.³³ The association of the rugby team with Van Riebeeck was clearly an indication of this. But there was the constant danger that the story of Van Riebeeck, "*n geskiedenisboek-verhaal sonder veel gevoelsinhoud*" [an historical tale without much emotional content], was constantly in danger of being relegated to the wings.³⁴ When the time came on Saturday and Sunday for the planned third phase of the festival to reach its crescendo, the laying of the foundation stone for a proposed gateway to Africa and the wreaths at the base of the Van Riebeeck (Van Niekerk) column, most people had lost interest in the proceedings. Only a few thousand people braved the cold wind and intermittent rain to attend the ceremonies.³⁵

²⁹Karp, 'Festivals', p.282.

³⁰*Cape Argus*, 12 April 1952.

³¹Kapp, *Ons Volksfeeste*, p.122.

³²Hughes and Atkinson, 'Beautiful Models', p.7. In Committee Minutes, Cape Town City Council, 27 March 1952, CA, 3/CT 1/1/1/113.

³³This rise to prominence of Van Riebeeck through the festival is one of the main arguments that Ciraj Rassool and I make in our paper, 'The 1952 Jan van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival: Constructing and Contesting Public National History in South Africa', *Journal of African History*, 34 (1993), pp 447-468.

³⁴*Die Burger*, 9 April 1952.

³⁵*Cape Times*, 7 April 1952.

Going to the festival fair

In contrast to the public ceremonies of the final days, the fair on the foreshore, which had begun during the planned second phase of Van Riebeeck's festival, attracted almost constant public attention. On its worst days, when the wind blew and there was a constant threat of rain, between fifteen and twenty thousand attended the fair. Over weekends and on public holidays, crowds reached in the vicinity of 80 000.³⁶ The fair was such a success that it was extended for a week after the formal ceremonies and pageantry were over. There were many, as well, who thought that the fair was the Van Riebeeck festival. Even a government minister, lamented *Die Burger's* festival correspondent, talked of the fair "*as die belangrikste deel van die fees*" [the most important part of the festival].³⁷ By the time that the fair closed its doors on 14 April, total attendance stood at 887 648.³⁸ Before they went home, the schoolboys from East London spent three days looking at the exhibition, saw "some beautiful models" and admitted that it was overall, "very good".³⁹

Although special excursions to the festival fair were organised for schools, and at times it seemed that the grounds were overflowing with children, gate receipts indicate that seventy percent of those who attended the fair paid two shillings, the entrance fee for adults.⁴⁰ Once inside the fairgrounds, a multitude of hidden charges emerged. There was an additional entrance fee to the replicas of the English and Dutch villages, ricksha rides cost two shillings and sixpence a time, and some of the restaurants charged between eight and twelve shillings

³⁶These numbers are based on attendance figures which appeared in *Die Burger*, 15-31 March, *Cape Times*, 17 March-15 April and the *Cape Argus*, 31 March-8 April 1952.

³⁷*Die Burger*, 11 April 1952. It seems that the correspondent was referring to the speech by Eric Louw, Minister of Economic Affairs, at the opening of the festival fair on 13 March 1952, SABC, 19/62-65 (52).

³⁸*Cape Times*, 15 April 1952. Of course, there were many people who went to the fair more than once, (such as the schoolchildren from East London) but it is impossible to tell how many. According to the *Cape Argus* (9 April 1952), "thousands of people had visited the Fair more than once".

³⁹Hughes and Atkinson, 'Beautiful Models', p.7.

⁴⁰On organised school visits to the fair see, for example, the *Wynberg Girls High School Magazine*, no 37 (August 1952); *Sea Point Magazine*, no 118, (December 1952); *Rustenburg High School for Girls Magazine*, (November 1952). *Die Burger*, 3 April 1952, comments on the large numbers of children in attendance, while the *Cape Argus*, 14 April 1952, provides statistics of receipts.

for lunch. One visitor to the fair was so horrified at the high food prices that he exclaimed, "Do you think I own the gold pavilion?"⁴¹ The fears of C J Smit of Goodwood, who wrote a letter to *Die Burger* at the beginning of March, that the festival would turn into an occasion, "*net vir die rykes van my ou volkie*" [only for the wealthy of my old little nation], seem to have been partially justified. Although some visitors saw the fair as a form of cheap entertainment, if one wanted to do more than take free samples and collect all the brochures, you needed "*geld, geld, geld*" [money, money, money].⁴²

Of the 800 000-odd who did manage to attend, the vast majority were white. This was despite attempts by the organisers to attract coloureds to the fair through special cheap days. On the first two days of the fair, there were no coloureds at all in attendance. Although the number rose to about 2 000 a day, this was far less than expected. The projected total attendance at the fair of one million, of which half were expected to be coloureds, was not achieved and the fair ran at a financial loss.⁴³

Siting the fair

The Van Riebeeck festival fair was sited in a part of Cape Town that, until the 1930s, had been under water: the foreshore. This area had been reclaimed from the sea in 1938 as part of the construction of a new dockyard and, over the next decade, many plans for its use were drawn up, rejected, revised and re-submitted.⁴⁴ Finally, in 1947, a joint report, with a frontispiece photograph of the "father" of Cape Town - Jan van Riebeeck on his pedestal in Adderley Street - was published by a committee consisting of representatives of the South African Railways and Harbours and the Cape Town City Council. The report saw the

⁴¹*Cape Times*, 19 March 1952; *Cape Argus*, 19 March 1952.

⁴²Interview with Yvonne Taylor, a visitor to the festival fair, 21 September 1994; Interview with Shirley Broomberg, a visitor to the festival fair, 4 September 1994; *Die Burger*, 3 and 5 March 1952.

⁴³*Cape Argus*, 14 April 1952; Financial Statement of the Van Riebeeck Fees, tot 30 Junie 1952, CA, A1646, vol 339.

⁴⁴An account of these various plans can be found in D Pinnock, 'Ideology and Urban Planning: Blueprints of a Garrison city', in W G James and M Simons, (eds), *The Angry Divide*, Cape Town (1989), pp.150-168.

development of the foreshore as part of the construction of a "New City", which would be characterised by its "Monumental Approaches". The approach from the sea side would lead onto a tree-lined pedestrian mall with a clear vista of Table Mountain, while from the land road traffic would be diverted onto a Grand Boulevard which "sweeps down the mountain-side in a series of smooth curves before entering the City in a broad park-like belt in the reclaimed area". At the intersection of these routes into the city, the foreshore would, it was envisaged, become the "'Gateway of South Africa'".⁴⁵

In order to accomplish this task, new roads and a railway station needed to be built, and some of the "troublesome", unplanned, "heterogeneous mass" of buildings which accommodated the "overwhelming influx of population from the countryside" had to make way for wide streets, spacious gardens and "fine, modern" commercial, government and residential buildings.⁴⁶ The planners noted that while this process of reconstruction had been accidentally facilitated in Europe during World War Two "through the appalling 'device' of aerial warfare", the foreshore gave them the opportunity to "re-create Cape Town for the needs of modern life".⁴⁷ Although it was claimed that this would mean "construction" rather than "destruction", the plan to create a new road system - which had already been envisaged as early as 1940 - and to 'modernise' the city by eliminating 'slum areas', meant that a number of properties in District Six, the area which housed a large proportion of the "waves of impoverished workers" who had moved into the city, would have to give way to the Grand Boulevard.⁴⁸ At a series of protest meetings in the early 1940s, when the initial plans were made public, the scheme was described as "'wholesale eviction'" and a "trick" to "disperse 27 000 ratepayers" under "the guise of slum clearance".⁴⁹ These protests, combined with debates over where to site the

⁴⁵The Cape Town Foreshore Plan: Final Report of the Cape Town Technical Committee June, 1947, Government Printer, Pretoria (1948), pp.v, 39-41; Pinnock, 'Ideology and Urban Planning', p.152.

⁴⁶The Cape Town Foreshore Plan, pp.19, 12, 16, 40; Pinnock, 'Ideology and Urban Planning', p.163. 'Almal se Mikrofoon: Inlywing van die droogleggebde gebied by die stadsgebied van Kaapstad', 15 January 1951, SABG 21/49(51).

⁴⁷The Cape Town Foreshore Plan, p.19.

⁴⁸The Cape Town Foreshore Plan, p.19; N Barnett, 'The Planned Destruction of District Six in 1940', UCT History Workshop (November, 1991), p.17; Pinnock, 'Ideology and Urban Planning', p.163.

⁴⁹Barnett, 'The Planned Destruction', p.13.

new station so as not to hinder the vista of the Monumental Approaches - eventually it was decided to build it below ground level - effectively blocked attempts to begin work on the foreshore scheme.⁵⁰ By 1950, none of the planned developments had taken place, there were no roads, water or electricity supplies available on the foreshore and the south-easterly wind made the area, at times, a "veritable howling desert, actually drawing the blood through the human skin".⁵¹

Other sites, such as Green Point Common, the Western Province Agricultural Association's show grounds at Goodwood, an amphitheatre at the base of Table Mountain and Wingfield airport had therefore come into consideration as venues for the Van Riebeeck festival fair. All except Green Point Common were rejected almost immediately because they could not be prepared in time, there was a danger of rock falls from Table Mountain if the building operations were undertaken and it was necessary to keep the airfield open to air traffic "*weens die onsekerhied in die internasionale situasie*" [due to the instability in the international situation].⁵² In the end, the choice was narrowed down to the foreshore and Green Point Common and the Cape Town City engineer, Solly Morris, was called upon to make a personal evaluation of their respective strengths and weaknesses. Even though Green Point had a stadium that was well under construction and the common had been used for the massive Liberty Cavalcade Exhibition in the second world war, he, not altogether surprisingly, favoured the foreshore which, only a few days before he submitted his report, had been officially incorporated into the city of Cape Town.⁵³ He argued that it would be considerably cheaper because there were railway sheds which could be converted into exhibition halls (he estimated the nett cost on the foreshore would be £99 000 as compared to £218 000 at Green Point), it was near the centre of the city, the gardens which would be developed could become

⁵⁰Minutes, Railway and Foreshore Special Committee, 27 June 1950, CA, 3/CT 1/5/19/1/3; Pinnock, 'Ideology and Urban Planning', p.152.

⁵¹Annual Report of Town Clerk for year ended 31 December 1951, in Minute of Mayor of Cape Town for year ended 5 September 1952, CA, 3/CT 1/7/1/49.

⁵²Memorandum to be submitted to the Minister of the Interior by the Cape Town Committee of the Van Riebeeck festival, 22 January 1951, A 1646, vol 339. Presumably the international situation that is being referred to is the Korean War.

⁵³Some of the details of the Liberty Cavalcades are discussed in more detail later in this chapter; 'Inlywing van die droogleggebde gebied', SABC 21/49(51).

part of the Monumental Approach on the foreshore and, even though it had been under water in 1652, it "[h]istorically mark[ed] the spot where Cape Town, and so ultimately the Union of South Africa, commenced its history".⁵⁴

This fitted in very neatly with plans for the foreshore which signified the space of Cape Town, in general, and the "vast area of virginal land", in particular, as "the first foothold of European civilisation in the sub-continent".⁵⁵ Green Point, in Morris' eyes, paled in comparison. He claimed that, while it contained greenery, it was "not attractive" when compared to the sandy, windswept wastes of the foreshore set "against the magnificent backcloth of Table Mountain" and, more importantly, it did not have the same "historical associations".⁵⁶ For the Van Riebeeck festival committee, the idea of locating the festival fair on the site where 'history began' was very appealing as it coincided with the promulgation of Van Riebeeck as the initiator of 'civilisation' and the South African past. Moreover, here was the opportunity to "level" the ground and, like Van Riebeeck, build "*n splinternuwe voorstad in die skaduwee van Tafelberg*" [a shining new suburb in the shadow of Table Mountain].⁵⁷ The foreshore, in spite of its lack of amenities, its seemingly inhospitable surrounds and a series of railway tracks which made the ground even more uneven, became the "*ideale en enigste terrein*" [ideal and only terrain] for the festival fair.⁵⁸

⁵⁴Report by City Engineer, Solly Morris, to members of the Van Riebeeck Committee, 19 January 1951, appendix C, memo to Minister of Interior from Cape Town Committee, A1646, vol 339.

⁵⁵The Cape Town Foreshore Plan, p.1.

⁵⁶Report by City Engineer, Solly Morris, to members of the Van Riebeeck Committee, 19 January 1951.

⁵⁷*African Mirror*, no 637, 10 September 1951, NFA, FA 253; *Ons Nuus*, no 21, 12 December 1951, NFA.

⁵⁸Interview with C Cilliers, assistant organiser, Van Riebeeck festival fair, Cape Town, 15 September 1993; Memorandum from Cape Town Committee to the Minister of the Interior, 22 January 1951, A 1646, vol 339.

On show at the fair

The festival fair and stadium, which ultimately cost in the region of £500 000, covered a fifty acre site on the foreshore.⁵⁹ There were 700 stands, located in five halls (the converted railway sheds), where a variety of manufacturers, retailers, municipalities, and specific organisations exhibited their 'achievements'. Specially constructed pavilions, which ranged in cost between £10 000 (for the motor industry pavilion) to £120 000 (for the gold pavilion), were devoted to the larger industries, such as sugar, diamonds and wine, and to the various provinces.⁶⁰ Beneath the looming presence of Jan van Riebeeck, in its exhibit, the Cape Town City Council, proudly displayed its futuristic model of the city, highlighting the planned foreshore development.⁶¹ A replica of the market place of Van Riebeeck's birthplace, Culemborg, and a fanciful reconstruction of an English village, Much-Binding-in-the Marsh, provided a return to the timeless 'romantic' European world. Finally, there was the large amusement park, where the rides included "the latest Dodge-em Cars, a trip through a haunted castle, the Helter Skelter and the Octopus".⁶²

Under the broad theme "South Africa During and After 300 Years", the intention of all these exhibits was to show the development of "agriculture, industry and mining" since 1652.⁶³ Further than that festival goers were largely left to their own devices as to what to see, what order to view the exhibits in and to establish how each exhibit fitted in to the larger theme. This was in marked contrast to an emerging trend in expositions after the second world war of providing an explicit narrative that attempted to control the viewing of the exhibits. The latter first made its appearance at the Festival of Britain in 1951 which commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the Crystal Palace exhibition. The design of the main exhibition, on

⁵⁹Financial Statement of the Van Riebeeck Festival, up to 30 June 1952, CA, A1646, vol 339.

⁶⁰*Cape Times*, 7 April 1952.

⁶¹Interview with Ken Halliday, designer of Cape Town pavilion, Van Riebeeck festival, 9 September 1994.

⁶²*Guide Book Festival Fair*, p.81.

⁶³*Guide Book Festival Fair*, p.31; Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Van Riebeeck Festival, 3 November 1950, US, Thom, Box 49.

the South Bank of the Thames, with its "carefully organized routes" and "surface treatments of water, cobbles, grass or concrete", was "to guide visitors unobtrusively in the correct direction". Exhibition halls were not categorised under a specific industry, but as a theme which dealt with "a definite sphere of activity", such as "the country or the home ... or sport and recreation". These themes were to be seen in order, like "chapters...in a book" so that the full "story of British contributions to world civilisation in the arts of peace" could emerge.⁶⁴ In contrast, the Van Riebeeck festival fair seemed, in the words of Douglas Brown, the *Daily Telegraph's* resident reporter in South Africa, to be a bit "higgeldy-piggeldy".⁶⁵

While the Van Riebeeck festival fair might have seemed disjointed, two characteristics held it together: the assertion of 'national' pride and the human showcases. This was reminiscent of the great world and empire expositions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These "ephemeral vistas", starting with the "founding spectacle" of the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, were media of nationing, rendering the world, the self and the other knowable, and engendering self-regulation.⁶⁶ The exhibitions sought

to place the people - conceived as a nationalized citizenry - on this side of power, both its subject and its beneficiary. To identify with power, to see it as ... a force regulated and channelled by society's ruling groups but for the good of all: this was the rhetoric of power embodied in the exhibitionary complex - a power made manifest ... by its ability to organize and co-ordinate an order of things and to produce a place for the people in relation to that order.⁶⁷

Central to this "exhibitionary complex" was a partial reversal of the "panoptical principle". Instead of self-discipline being engendered by a "state of conscious and permanent visibility" through the unseen, seeing supervisor, it was largely generated by casting the "eyes of the

⁶⁴J Allwood, *The Great Exhibitions*, London (1977), pp.152-3; Henry Howell, 'The Festival of Britain', 19 April 1951, SABC, T 51/16; I Cox, *The South Bank Exhibition: A Guide to the story it tells*, London (1951), p.8.

⁶⁵*Cape Times*, 5 April 1952.

⁶⁶P Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's fairs, 1851 - 1939*, Manchester (1988); C Breckenridge, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Colonial Collecting: India at World Fairs', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 31, 2 (April 1989), p.197; T Bennet, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', *New Formations*, 4, (Spring 1988), pp.76-80.

⁶⁷Bennet, 'Exhibitionary Complex', p.80.

multitude" upon the "assemblage of glorious commodities", the "products of their labour".⁶⁸ The displays of "national industry" and "national culture" at world fairs sought to instil a sense of 'national achievement' and make the gazing public proud of "thousands of square miles of land they would never visit ... often having different climates, customs and languages".⁶⁹

The power of this spectacle of 'industrial progress' lay not merely in its own presentation, but also in its juxtaposition with displays of 'primitiveness' and 'backwardness'. "Human showcases", often consisting of an array of "native villages", were a constant feature of the world fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, with the Paris Exposition of 1889 setting the trend. 'Natives', who were "specially imported" to Paris from Senegal, Congo, New Caledonia, Gabon, Dahomey, China and Java, spent their time in specially fenced enclosures, building their "huts", making items of clothing and performing for the crowds of curious onlookers.⁷⁰ There was also a reconstructed "chaotic" Cairo bazaar, with its "dirty" buildings and crowded shops, where visitors could take a ride on a donkey for a franc a time.⁷¹ Four years later, the Chicago Columbian Exposition, which commemorated the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus' landing - and included in its programme a musical on Columbus' life with written by Antonin Dvorak - copied the Parisian example and set up an area a mile long, the Midway Plaisance, where seventeen "native groups" could live, perform and, daily, parade up and down, for all to see. Once again, one of the highlights was a "narrow and dark Street in Cairo, where donkey-boys accosted the visitor and Little Egypt lured him with the belly dance".⁷²

⁶⁸M Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Harmondsworth (1987), p.210; G Davison, 'Festivals of Nationhood: The International Exhibitions' in S L Goldberg and F B Smith (eds), *Australian Cultural History*, Cambridge (1988), p.161. This reversal of the panoptic principle is of a partial nature, for, as Bennet ('Exhibitionary Complex', pp.78-81) argues, the exhibitions sometimes functioned both as spectacle and surveillance, citing the Eiffel Tower at the Paris exhibition of 1889 as a prime example of this.

⁶⁹Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, pp.89, 113.

⁷⁰Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, pp.88-9.

⁷¹T Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, Berkeley (1991), p.1.

⁷²C M Hinsley, 'The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893' in I Karp and S D Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures*, pp.348, 356; Dvorak's score was later to form part of his *New World Symphony*, D Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, Chapel Hill (1990), p.168.

All these human showcases were presented in vivid contrast to the 'triumphs' of 'civilisation' and 'industrial progress'. The "constructed chaos" of the "jumble" of 'native villages' on the Midway Plaisance were displayed before the "colossal buildings", "massive machinery" and statuesque exhibits of the Colombian Exposition of 1893.⁷³ Amidst the "geometric" order and cleanliness of the Parisian exhibition of 1889 stood the "carefully chaotic" streets of Cairo.⁷⁴ And, above all, stood the Eiffel tower, "casting its shadow" over the 'native villages' "like a giant Triumphal monument".⁷⁵ Here, in

[a] culture/nature juxtaposition of terrifying simplicity, the vast, gaunt tower represented the power that had enabled the imperial take-over of the lands the villages stood for. Struts, pillars and cables of iron begged comparison with the mud, sticks and leaves the people of the villages had constructed their dwellings with.⁷⁶

As the world exhibitions placed the human race on an evolutionary scale, the national identity of 'progress' and 'achievement' became intertwined with a racial one. The boundaries of what was "self" and what was "other" were defined in terms of a 'racial type' which was pronounced as being 'industrially advanced' and having reached a higher stage of 'civilisation' than that achieved by the 'savagery' of the 'native condition'.⁷⁷ Through the exhibition, white citizens of the imperial powers became the "just beneficiaries" of this social evolution, bounded together and identified "in opposition to the primitive otherness of conquered peoples".⁷⁸

According to Greenhalgh, the human showcases and 'native villages' had gradually begun to disappear from the world's fairs by the 1930s after much protest and accusations of racism.⁷⁹

⁷³Hinsley, 'The World as Marketplace', pp.351, 356.

⁷⁴Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, p.1.

⁷⁵Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, p.97.

⁷⁶Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, p.97.

⁷⁷R Greenstein, 'South African Studies and the Politics of Theory: Old Challenges and New Paradigms', *Paradigms Lost, Paradigms Regained*, Journal of Southern African Studies Conference, York (September 1994), p.9.

⁷⁸Bennet, 'The Exhibitionary Complex', p.92.

⁷⁹Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, p.91.

In addition, as Corbey points out, ethnographic films and "pseudo-scientific anthropological treatises", richly illustrated with photographs, started to replace the human exhibits.⁸⁰ Another reason might be that the supply of 'native people' from some regions had begun to dry up, particularly from areas where the white settler populations exercised considerable local control over the 'natives' through an assemblage of legislation, political structures and notions of racial segregation. This was certainly the case in South Africa, which had supplied many of the human showcases for the world fairs. At the Greater Britain Exhibition in 1899 at Earls Court, 174 "natives from South Africa" had been displayed alongside a variety of African animals, with the bushmen being placed with the baboons, before being moved over to Olympia to perform in the dramatic presentation, 'Briton, Boer and Black in Savage South Africa'.⁸¹ Colonial officials in Britain and South Africa had reservations about these displays, the main cause of anxiety being that they might detract from the ability to supply and control labour for the mines in Kimberley and the Witwatersrand.⁸² In the 1930s, the South African government's Native Affairs Department was becoming increasingly concerned about the "detrimental" effect of these "excursions" and that it was losing its authority over the 'natives' once they were in Europe or America. In spite of assurances from those organising the expeditions that they would "keep Natives in compounds", applications to send "Zulu dancers" to New York, bushmen to London and "Native singers" to Europe were all rejected by the department.⁸³ The case of Captain van der Loo from Holland who, in 1939, applied for permission to exhibit "25 kaffers en ... enkele vrouwen en kinderen" [25 kaffirs and some women and children] at the South Africa and Netherlands exhibition at the Hague, is a clear example of the implementation of this policy. He promised to cover travel and maintenance costs and to ensure that in Holland "de kaffers onder stricte supervisi staan" [the kaffirs would be strictly supervised]. They would live in "afgeslote ruimte in rondavels" [an enclosed space in rondawels] in the zoo where they would be closely watched, never be allowed to go out

⁸⁰R Corbey, 'Ethnographic Showcases, 1870 - 1930', *Cultural Anthropology* 8, 3 (1993), p.358.

⁸¹Corbey, 'Ethnographic Showcases', p.342; Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, New Haven and London (1994), pp.86, 89.

⁸²Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, p.90.

⁸³Memo by D L Smit, Secretary for Native Affairs, to the Minister of Native Affairs, RE; Application by Captain F.A. van der Loo for permission to take Natives to Holland, 8 May 1939, CAD, NTS 9629, 505/400.

by themselves and be totally forbidden from drinking alcohol.⁸⁴ The Department, however, remained totally unconvinced and turned down his application. "[W]hatever measures of control may be exercised" maintained D L Smit, the Secretary for Native Affairs, these journeys made the 'natives' "unfit ... to resume their normal life in the reserves".⁸⁵

Instead of sending 'natives' abroad, they were displayed in larger numbers at South African exhibitions, where control could be more effectively maintained. In 1937, at the first ever Empire Exhibition held outside of Britain, Donald Bain, the big-game hunter, exhibited a group of bushmen at the Milner Park showgrounds in Johannesburg. Beneath the huge central tower, with its radiating spotlight, and in the shadow of an enormous model aeroplane travelling along the "principal Imperial air routes" of the world, these proclaimed "living fossils" of the Kalahari were displayed for both locals and "*reisigers uit die vier hoeke van die wereld*" [travellers from the four corners of the world].⁸⁶ A few years later, during the Second World War, 'native performances' became a major attraction at a series of Liberty Cavalcades which were held throughout South Africa to raise money for the Governor Generals' War Fund and to tell "the story of a great war-time achievement by the home front". At the Liberty Cavalcade at St Georges Park in Port Elizabeth in 1943, a group of forty Abakweta from the Transkei, "living under natural conditions" performed "their sacred [initiation] rituals... to the amazement of thousands" seated in specially constructed grand stands.⁸⁷ In the Cape Town cavalcade, held at Green Point Common, not only was there a "Native Village", situated adjacent to the "graceful" and "modern" building of the Soviet Pavilion with its dominating "high tower", but the "Native share" took on a much "more sophisticated character". At the "Dead Horse Gulch Dance Hall" a "troupe of native players"

⁸⁴Capt F A van der Loo to D L Smit, Secretary for Native Affairs, 24 April 1939, CAD, NTS 9629 505/400.

⁸⁵Memo by D L Smit to the Minister of Native Affairs, 8 May 1939, CAD, NTS 9629, 505/400.

⁸⁶*Empire Exhibition Souvenir Catalogue*, Johannesburg (1936), p.129; R Gordon, *The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass*, Boulder (1992) p.148; *Rykstentoonstelling Suid Afrika / Empire Exhibition South Africa*, Johannesburg September 1936 - January 1937 (nd), pp.4-5. For an account of the bushman display at the Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg see R Gordon, "Bain's Bushmen": Scenes at the Empire Exhibition, 1936', African Studies Association Annual Meeting, Boston (November 1993).

⁸⁷*Liberty Cavalcade: Cape Midlands, July - August 1943: The Story of a Great War-time Achievement by the Home Front*, Port Elizabeth (1943), front cover and p.24.

from Johannesburg sang, danced and told stories through word and music about "their past and present existence in their native kraals".⁸⁸

Like their counterparts in Europe and the United States, these human showcases asserted, through comparison with the industrial displays, the towering structures and the pavilions devoted to demonstrating the 'progress' of various 'nations', a human evolutionary scale with 'western civilisation' paramount. Moreover, they advanced a racial identity which associated whites in Africa as 'European' rather than 'native' and as the bearers of the first "lamp of civilisation" in Southern Africa. It was from this initial spark at the "ancient Cape", asserted R Stuttaford, chair of Western Province Liberty Cavalcade, that "lambent beams spread throughout the dark continent" of Africa. In these terms the Second World War was being fought by "our lads" to defend Cape Town as the "cradle of civilisation".⁸⁹ The native villages and performances thus served as a reminder to the largely white audiences in the southernmost part of Africa that if they lost control, "the Darkest Africa of fiction ... [was] not so far distant".⁹⁰

The Van Riebeeck festival fair, with its multitude of human showcases, was, to a large extent, the culmination of all these displays, which were not solely of the 'native' variety. Significantly, 'European' life was also depicted in two village scenes, the market place of Van Riebeeck's birthplace, Culemborg, and, its English counterpart, Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh. Unlike the 'native villages', these were not displays of 'backwardness', but evoked a "primitivist discourse" of 'tradition' and 'national heritage' in a 'quaint' 'olde world' set apart from "those people classified as 'black'".⁹¹

The English village was named after a British Broadcasting Corporation radio sitcom which was set on a Royal Airforce base, turned country club, Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh. The

⁸⁸*Western Province Liberty Cavalcade*, March 1944, Programme, Cape Town (1944), map of Liberty Cavalcade, pp.41, 19.

⁸⁹*Western Province Liberty Cavalcade*, March 1944, Programme, pp.9, 7.

⁹⁰*Liberty Cavalcade: Cape Midlands*, July - August 1943, p.24.

⁹¹Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, p.187.

programme originally ran on the BBC between 1947 and 1953 and was rebroadcast in South Africa, initially on the English service and later on the newly established commercial station, Springbok Radio, in the early '50s.⁹² These adventures of "radio's best-loved team" proved to be so popular that when it was temporarily suspended, "[s]trong men went home grey and haggard and beautiful women wept into tiny squares of tainted embroidered cambric".⁹³ It was this sense of English farce that pervaded Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh when the air base, turned country club, found a new form as a "typical hamlet" of "the Southern Counties of England" at the Van Riebeeck festival fair in Cape Town.⁹⁴ Much-Binding, which in England did not "exist at all",⁹⁵ was brought to life at the Van Riebeeck festival as an old-fashioned, somewhat comic and considerably sanitised version of an idyllic English rural past. In the words of one visitor, "[i]t seemed as if a little bit of England had dropped right down into South Africa".⁹⁶

The village had its "Norman" church, "Tudor-style" buildings, a "typical ... English 'local'" called "The Lion", its "quaint" "Old Curiosity Shop" and Village Green.⁹⁷ "[P]roper British people" with "British accents" directed visitors to various parts of the village.⁹⁸ To make it even more "pretty authentic", there was a replica of one of the "old English forms of punishment", a set of stocks.⁹⁹ Stocks were used in England up until the late eighteenth century to punish those who were judged to have committed criminal or morally reprehensible acts or to have uttered offensive statements. They were a form of what Foucault calls

⁹²P Donovan, *The Radio Companion*, London (1991), p.183; *Radio: Journal of the SABC*, vol 1, no 9, (23 June 1950), p.7; *Radio*, vol 1, no 40, (26 June 1951), p.23.

⁹³*Radio* vol 1, no 40 (26 June 1951), p.23. Much-Binding has had several re-runs in Britain, the most recent being at the outbreak of the Gulf War. Both King George VI and the British Prime Minister, John Major, are reported to have been among its most ardent fans. Donovan, *The Radio Companion*, p.183.

⁹⁴*Guide Book Festival Fair*, p.47.

⁹⁵*African Mirror* no 665, 24 March 1952, NFA, FA 2624.

⁹⁶M Cresswell, 'The Van Riebeeck Festival', *The Chronicle of Cambridge High School* (December 1952), p.27.

⁹⁷Report and Proposals on Agenda Items, Pamphlet Collection, CAD, p. 448.

⁹⁸Interview with Rosalie Kleynhans, a visitor to the festival fair, 7 September 1994.

⁹⁹*African Mirror*, no 622, 24 March 1952, NFA, FA 2624.

"punishment as spectacle", where the body was "the major target of penal repression".¹⁰⁰

Those convicted were

chained by the legs to a post ... head and hands were stuck through a board and clamped there and ... left to the mercies of the crowd for a night on the market square ... [in] that crouching, ludicrous, beast-like posture, the terrible exposure of the naked face and head, detached from the rest of the body, offered like a pumpkin at a fair for the crowd to shy at....¹⁰¹

Such horrifying acts in these "gloomy festival[s] of punishment" were intended to deter both those being punished and the crowd from further criminal activities. They came to an end from the late eighteenth century as punishment started to become hidden and the trial became a public ritual in which discipline was schooled.¹⁰² The stocks themselves did not disappear. Not entirely stripped of their previous meaning, they remained items of festivity as objects of amusement and curiosity at fairs. At Much-Binding in Cape Town they proved to be the most popular section of the village, in particular with members of the South African government who "showed some interest" in their workings.¹⁰³ The visitor victims to Much-Binding did not have to face the daunting prospect of a continual bombardment by a crowd hurling a variety of objects. They placed their head through the "very realistic stocks" for a few moments¹⁰⁴, had their 'snaps' taken by the resident photographer or were filmed with the increasingly popular hand-held eight millimetre movie camera,¹⁰⁵ and then, instead of being led away "crouching ... with a back bent like a submissive animal,"¹⁰⁶ moved, with ease, to locate Van Riebeeck's birthplace, Culemborg.

¹⁰⁰Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.8.

¹⁰¹B Unsworth, *Sacred Hunger*, Harmondsworth (1992), p.332.

¹⁰²Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp.9, 111.

¹⁰³*African Mirror*, no 622, 24 March 1952, NFA, FA, 2624.

¹⁰⁴Cape Times, *The Festival in Pictures*, Cape Town (1952), p.49; *Movietone News*, April 1952, NFA, FA 747.

¹⁰⁵Cresswell, 'The Van Riebeeck Festival', p.27. Some of these 'home movies' on the Van Riebeeck festival have been deposited in the National Film Archives in Pretoria. They are untitled and the names of those who took the films are unknown. See, for example, NFA, FA 7495 and FA 12291.

¹⁰⁶Unsworth, *Sacred Hunger*, p.333.

Culemborg was constructed "along similar lines" to Much-Binding, offering a "Dutch section" to counterpose with the English village.¹⁰⁷ The market square, the town hall, the barrel organ, the "Magic Garden" built by Philips Electrical company and the "fantastic puppet plays" offered by the "'old Culemborg comity'" all proclaimed a European heritage of Dutch descent to the visitors to the festival fair.¹⁰⁸ But, if Much-Binding provided 'tradition' and 'culture', Culemborg, as Van Riebeeck's birthplace, had also to sustain History. It deliberately set itself apart from the rest of the fair, had a special ceremony at which its foundation stone was laid by the Dutch ambassador and charged an entrance fee to indicate that it was not "*een gewone tentoonstelling, maar een gelegenheid*" [an ordinary exhibit but an experience].¹⁰⁹ History was conveyed through a "Jan van Riebeeck-Room", where Jan, Maria and their son, Lambertus sat in "a wonderful, soft light" surrounded by "heavy ... straight lined oak furniture", old maps and paintings by the "Dutch masters".¹¹⁰ Culemborg, even though it was not part of Holland at the time of Van Riebeeck's birth - it was part of an independent county in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - became the link between the festival fair and the History of the festival. Like its historical ancestor, Culemborg in Cape Town stood out "as a separate entity" amidst "the bustle of the foreshore", affirming Holland and Van Riebeeck respectively, as the "*stamland*" [land of descent] and the founder a "*nuwe volk*" [new nation].¹¹¹

This nation, derived out from Culemborg, located itself very firmly at the top of an imaginary human evolutionary scale. It was a nation that proclaimed that its Dutch ancestors had entrusted it with the torch of "*Christelike Westerse beskawing op die donker vasteland van Afrika*" [Western Christian civilisation on the dark continent of Africa].¹¹² The illuminated tower on the market square of Culemborg was intended to shine above the fair like "a beacon"

¹⁰⁷*Movietone News*, April 1952, NFA, FA 747.

¹⁰⁸*Guide Book Festival Fair*, pp.41-2; Netherlands Van Riebeeck Committee, Cape Town, *Culemborg 1952*, Cape Town (1952).

¹⁰⁹*Ons Nuus*, No 21, 12 December 1951, NFA FA 9623; *Culemborg 1952*, p.12; Minutes of Meeting of Nederlands Van Riebeeck Committee 18 June 1951, ANV.

¹¹⁰*Culemborg 1952*, pp.15-16.

¹¹¹*Culemborg 1952*, p.3; Message from D F Malan to the Nederlandse Volk, 25 March 1952, SABC 28/52(52).

¹¹²D F Malan's message to the Nederlandse Volk, 25 March 1952.

of "civilisation",¹¹³ while, in its shadow, scattered around the show ground, a series of human showcases exhibited an essential 'native condition', marked by 'tribalism', 'natural crafts' and 'superstition'. At the Bantu Pavilion, the Native Affairs Department sought to interest the public in the "*Primitiewe Lewe van die Bantoe*" [Primitive life of the Bantu], by having 'real' 'Natives' "actually demonstrating their work and customs on the spot".¹¹⁴ In a "Tribal Life courtyard"¹¹⁵ visitors were able to see a group of "unhurried" Zulus, under the supervision of Wyatt Sampson - publicity officer of the NAD - living in "specially constructed kias", building "the best type" of rudimentary huts while they eyed "the neat thatching of Much-Binding-in-the-Marsh village with a considerable amount of envy".¹¹⁶ "Native crafts" were performed "by skilled brown hands" and a "witchdoctor" or tribal medicine man ... display[ed] his herbs and paraphernalia".¹¹⁷ Ricksha pullers from Durban, "chosen for their picturesque appearance", "amazingly bedecked", "legs whitewashed" and "[h]orncrowned like Isis", were seen "in the flesh" and conveyed festival goers about the fairgrounds for 2/6 a ride.¹¹⁸ Finally, placed by the festival organisers on the bottom rung of this human evolutionary scale, at the first stage of human development,¹¹⁹ were the bushmen from South-West Africa, portrayed as the "essential Africans" who hunted, lived in a world of ecological symbiosis and had no history.¹²⁰ Under the supervision of the anthropologist-cum-game

¹¹³Opening of Festival Fair, 13 March 1952, Commentary by Pieter Naude, SABC 19/62-65(52).

¹¹⁴Begroting Bantoe Paviljoen: Van Riebeeckfees, nd; Memorandum on Native Affairs Exhibit at Van Riebeeck Festival Fair, 2 Nov. 1951, CAD, NTS 9787 987/400, Part 1.

¹¹⁵NAD statement to SAPA on the Bantu Pavilion, November 1951, CAD, NTS 9787 987/400 Part 1.

¹¹⁶*Natal Daily News*, 5 December 1951; *The Diocesan College Magazine*, xxxvii, 1 (March 1952), p.50; *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 March 1952.

¹¹⁷NAD statement to SAPA on the Bantu Pavilion, November 1951, NTS 9787 987/400 Part 1.

¹¹⁸Report and Proposals on Agenda Items, Pamphlet Collection, CAD, p. 448; *Durban Visitors and Tourists' Brochure*, Durban (1953?), p.3; *Cape Argus*, 22 March 1952; *Cape Times*, 19 March 1952.

¹¹⁹Begroting Bantoe Paviljoen: Van Riebeeckfees, nd, CAD, NTS 9787 987/400, Part 1.

¹²⁰J M Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Intellectual History*, New York (1993), p.105.

warden, P J Schoeman, these "earliest Natives"¹²¹ crafted their bows and arrows in the gaze of curious onlookers at the South-West Africa pavilion.

Although the juxtaposition of the modern and primitive was crucial to the way in which these 'native villagers' were displayed to the visitors at the Van Riebeeck festival fair, merely depicting them as backward would have contradicted the claim of the Europeans as the bearer of civilisation to Africa. Central to the colonial enterprise throughout Africa was the assertion of "progress for the colonial people ... through the diffusion of 'modernization'".¹²² This had been reinforced after the Second World War, as colonial powers, attempting to retain a degree of control in the face of emerging movements for independence, portrayed some type of "wise" and "benevolent" colonial rule - either in political and/or economic form - as the way to sustain and promote development.¹²³ In South Africa this diffusionist model of modernisation was translated into "Betterment for the Bantu".¹²⁴ On one level this involved a series of sometimes haphazard government policies which, from the late 1930s, sought to intervene in rural African communities which were becoming increasingly destitute largely as a result of land dispossession. The solution, put forward by the Department of Native Affairs, was not to consider the issue of land distribution, but to institute 'rational' and 'scientific' farming methods which limited cattle holdings - "an essential part of any betterment scheme" - and fenced off areas to rigidly demarcate pastoral, residential and arable land.¹²⁵ At another level, betterment categorised race and gender as the determining features of advancement and development. The "Bantu men" were depicted as spending "much of their time in fighting and hunting", "forging assegais", ruthlessly killing off "all their male opponents" and seizing as many cattle as they could with complete disregard for "any tradition of husbandry", while the women tilled the soil with "primitive hoes", barely managing to

¹²¹H R Roberts and K G Coleman, *Betterment for the Bantu*, Native Affairs Department, Pretoria (1952), p.4.

¹²²Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model*, p.28.

¹²³Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model*, p.28.

¹²⁴H R Roberts and K G Coleman, *Betterment for the Bantu*, cover.

¹²⁵J Yawitch, *Betterment: The Myth of Homeland Agriculture*, Johannesburg (1982), p.10; H Roberts and G Coleman, *Betterment for the Bantu*, pp.13-14; I Hofmeyr, *"We Spend Our Years As a Tale That Is Told": Oral historical narrative in a South African Chieftdom*, Johannesburg (1993), p.11.

"scratch the surface of the soil".¹²⁶ The "White man", although he had inadvertently brought about an increase in stock and human population through "his knowledge of medicine and veterinary science", was characterised as bringing an end to "fighting and cattle seizing", providing education for "the rural Natives" and improving "their land" in the face of the "intensely suspicious" "Bantu".¹²⁷ To leave the 'Natives' on display at the Van Riebeeck festival fair in a 'primitive state' would have negated this supposed self-proclaimed concern of Jan van Riebeeck and the "White race" for "the dictates of Christianity and civilisation" and "the upliftment of the Bantu in all spheres - spiritual, physical and economic".¹²⁸

With the South African government's apartheid policy starting to come in for severe criticism, the Department of Native Affairs was concerned to portray this sense of 'native progress' under white tutelage at the Van Riebeeck festival.¹²⁹ Just under £10 000 was spent by the Department on its exhibit at the fair - exceeding the initial budget estimate by nearly £3 000 - to create what the Department considered to be the "*korrekte indruk*" [correct impression] of "*apartheidsbeleid*" [apartheid policy] for both local and international visitors.¹³⁰ Instead of situating "*naturelle ontwikkeling*" [native development] in the various provincial exhibits, which might have cost less but would have produced an 'incorrect' image of an "*integrasiebeleid*" [integrationist policy], the Department constructed a separate, "huge pavilion ... for the display of non-European arts and crafts and all forms of development and achievement".¹³¹ Through, this exhibit apartheid was to be deracinated, located within a "*globale beeld*" [global view] of 'civilising influences' and turned into a "*juiste beeld*"

¹²⁶Roberts and Coleman, *Betterment for the Bantu*, pp.4-6.

¹²⁷Roberts and Coleman, *Betterment for the Bantu*, pp.6, 15, 11.

¹²⁸H B Thom, 'Introduction' to *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, vol 1, p.xxxix; Memorandum on Native Affairs Exhibit at Van Riebeeck Festival Fair, 2 November 1951, CAD, NTS 9787 987/400, Part 1.

¹²⁹*The Friend*, 23 November 1951; *Rand Daily Mail*, 23 November 1951; *Die Transvaler*, 12 September 1951.

¹³⁰Secretary for Native Affairs, Memo, 19 February 1952, CAD, NTS 9787 987/400 Part II; Begroting Bantoe Paviljoen, nd, CAD, NTS 9787 987/400 Part 1.

¹³¹Begroting Bantoe Paviljoen, nd, NTS 9787 987/400 Part 1; *Drum*, November 1951. The bushmen, as was indicated earlier, were not displayed in the Bantu Pavilion. The reasons for this are discussed later in this chapter.

[correct/just view] of what the "*Regering vir die Bantoe doen*" [Government is doing for the Bantu] to "assist them to progress in their own sphere".¹³²

To display this "raising [of] the native from his primitive state" under the aegis of 'western civilisation', apartheid and the 'white man', the Bantu Pavilion was arranged on a west-east axis in a series of courtyards through which the visitor would progress.¹³³ Seemingly inverting the journey of progression that the exhibit sought to project, the visit started in the west by entering the "cheap lorry sheds", adorned with gabled, cut-out huts, to inspect the "Tribal Life courtyard".¹³⁴ Here, adjacent to the "traditional... craftsmen and women of various tribes", performing their crafts for 7/6 per day,¹³⁵ and the two "Zulu 'policemen'" from Pretoria who "acted their part" in "Zulu dress and character" "to good effect",¹³⁶ sat Chief Moroka from Thaba Nchu in the Orange Free State, Chief Mohlaba from Letaba in the Northern Transvaal and Chief Hlengwa from Umbumbulu in Natal.¹³⁷ For 10/- a day these chiefs, on a rotational basis, deliberated "upon the affairs of their tribe" with the help of their counsellors - who were paid 7/6 per day - and a teacher who assisted "the participants or 'actors' in producing life-like representations of the conduct of tribal business".¹³⁸ After leaving the chief, his counsellors and their instructors to their deliberations, the visitor moved eastward to a "courtyard of a native school", where a group of pupils from Besonvale Institution in Herschel

¹³²Begroting Bantoe Paviljoen, nd; Memo from Liaison Officer, Department of Native Affairs, W A Sampson, 4 August 1951, CAD, NTS 9787 987/400 Part 1.

¹³³Note to the Accountant on the Departmental Exhibit, nd, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 1.

¹³⁴Memorandum on Native Affairs Exhibit at Van Riebeeck Festival Fair Cape Town, 14 March-5 April 1952, 2 November 1951, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 1.

¹³⁵Liaison Officer, NAD, to Native Commissioner, Sibasa, n.d., CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 11.

¹³⁶F Rosdeth, Under Secretary for Native Affairs to Superintendent, Westfort Institution, 17 May 1952.

¹³⁷F Rosdeth to (a) Chief Native Commissioner, Pietersburg, 5 May 1952 (b) Chief Native Commissioner Pietermaritzburg, 1 May 1952 CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 11; Chief Native Commissioner Potchefstroom to Secretary for Native Affairs, 29 January 1952, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400, Part 11; Onderhoud van Sekretaris van Naturellesake met kapteins en raadslede in diens by die Van Riebeeckfees, Woensdag 9 April 1952, NAD Memo, 28 April 1952, CAD, NTS 9788, 987/400 Part 111.

¹³⁸NAD Statement to South African Press Association on Bantu Pavilion, November 1951, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400, Part 1; Note on Demonstration of Operation of Bantu Authorities Act at Van Riebeeck Festival Fair, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400, Part 11, 22 January 1952; Secretary for Native Affairs to Chief Inspector of Native Education, n.d., CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 11.

put up a "splendid performance" in a demonstration classroom under the supervision of their "native teacher", Mr Diau.¹³⁹ Finally, the visit ended in the "Progress Courtyard", where the Native Affairs Department declared itself to be the facilitator of 'native advancement'. The agricultural betterment schemes which made "the Bantu ... adopt productive rather than destructive farming methods" were demonstrated, a government clinic displayed "its ... activities on behalf of the Native population" and took "care of Native casualties at the Fair", and a "neat modern self-built Native home" was shown in the process of construction by Phineas Leballo and Alfred Mohale.¹⁴⁰ Like all those on exhibition at the Native Affairs pavilion, these builders were presented as "Bantu pupils of state training institutes".¹⁴¹

However, these pupils sometimes got out of hand and did not always co-operate with the Native Affairs Department. The first problem had been to find 'natives' who were willing to go on display in Cape Town. Initially the Native Affairs Department had hoped to draw upon 'local natives' resident in Langa, but the strength of the boycott in the township made this virtually impossible.¹⁴² Fears were raised that the display might have to be abandoned and it was only after scouring the country, offering material incentives, and transporting people "at considerable expense" from as far afield as Sterkspruit - in the eastern Cape, over 1 000 kilometres from Cape Town - that exhibits were found for the 'bantu pavilion'.¹⁴³ Then, when the exhibitors arrived in Cape Town, they were made to feel very unwelcome in Langa.¹⁴⁴ They were thus forced to stay at a "vacant military camp" at Firgrove and were transported

¹³⁹F Rosdeth, Under-Secretary for Native Affairs, to Siphso Mbete, Chairman Bensonvale School, 5 May 1952, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400; *Guide Book Festival Fair*, p.59.

¹⁴⁰NAD Statement to SAPA, on Bantu pavilion, November 1951, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 part 1; *Guide Book Festival Fair*, p.59; Secretary for Native Affairs to Organiser Industrial Work, CAD, NTS 9787, NTS 987/400 Part 11, 31 January 1952; *Cape Times*, 20 March 1952.

¹⁴¹*Guide Book Festival Fair*, p.59; Secretary for Native Affairs to Organiser Industrial Work, 31 January 1952, CAD, NTS 9787, NTS 987/400 Part 11.

¹⁴²G M Caine, Principal, Weaving School St Cuthberts, Tsolo to A W Sampson, Liaison Officer, NAD, 12 February 1952, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 11. See chapter three for an account of the boycott campaign.

¹⁴³Memo from A W Sampson, Liaison Officer, NAD to Secretary for Native Affairs, 19 February 1952; Telegram from Secretary for Native Affairs to Chief Native Commissioner, Kingwilliamstown, 3 March 1952, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 11.

¹⁴⁴P S Mbete, Principal Bensonvale Institution, Herschel to A W Sampson, Liaison Officer, NAD, 25 February 1952, CAD, NTS 9787 987/400 Part 11.

to Cape Town each day in a truck by Obed Ambrose Mashaba, a cinema announcer from the NAD head office, who drove recklessly, reaching speeds of 55 miles per hour.¹⁴⁵ Even though the 'native exhibits' were isolated at the camp, it still seems as if they were still being pressurised to "desert the undertaking". Only after the Native Affairs Department officials in charge of the exhibit called upon chiefs Moroka, Hlengwa and Mohlaba to act as "stabilisers" was the withdrawal of the "100 Native" demonstrators averted.¹⁴⁶ At the camp itself, complaints started to emerge over the food and drink arrangements. Under pressure not to alienate the 'natives' they had managed to entice to Cape Town, NAD officials gave special permission "for the 'home brewing' of ±15 gallons of K/beer per day at the camp for consumption by the native inmates".¹⁴⁷ Finally, the ricksha pullers from Durban, although not part of the NAD display, started taking the festival organisers for a ride. Brought down from Durban at a cost of some £2 500, they started by-passing the special ticket system, whereby they would receive twenty percent of daily receipts as their wages, and pocketed money for the rides directly from their passengers.¹⁴⁸ Only after fair officials threatened that they would start hiring out the rickshas to the "Zulu boys" at £2 10s per day and that they would have to pay for food and board from their daily earnings, did this practice come to a halt.¹⁴⁹ Overall it would seem that the local officials had as much trouble in controlling the 'natives' at home as when they had travelled abroad to be exhibited.

Attempting to maintain control over the 'natives' not only meant displaying their 'primitiveness' followed by 'progress' under white tutelage, but also asserting and presenting

¹⁴⁵F Rosdeth to Chief Magistrate Umtata, 15 March 1952, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 11; NAD to Chief Magistrate, Somerset West, 22 March 1952, CAD, NTS 9788, 987/400, Part 111; Memo from Liaison Officer to Under Secretary for Native Affairs, Staff for Van Riebeeck Festival Fair, 13 December 1951, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 1; Secretary for Native Affairs to Secretary to the Treasury, 2 February 1953, CAD, TES 3973 F20/991/1; W C M Smith to The Manager, Government garage, 22 March 1952, CAD, NTS 9788, 987/400 Part 111.

¹⁴⁶F Rosdeth to (a) Chief Native Commissioner, Pietersburg, 5 May 1952 (b) Chief Native Commissioner Pietermaritzburg, 1 May 1952, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 11.

¹⁴⁷NAD to Chief Magistrate, Somerset West, 22 March 1952, CAD, NTS 9788, 987/400, Part 111.

¹⁴⁸Report and Proposals on Agenda Items, Pamphlet collection, CAD, p. 448.

¹⁴⁹*Cape Times*, 19 March 1952.

a white South African nation, which would cut across class and ethnic divisions.¹⁵⁰ As was indicated in chapter two, this development of a white settler nationalism was central to the conception of the Van Riebeeck festival as a whole. In the festival fair specifically it was intended to feature prominently through highlighting local manufacturing industry. Unlike the agricultural sector, which was largely the preserve of Afrikaner farmers, and the mining sector, which was dominated by English capitalists, secondary industry was represented as a [white] South African achievement. Local manufacturers, with the assistance of sympathetic governments which had imposed tariff barriers, had increased the value of goods produced from £84 million in 1925 to an estimated £1 000 million in 1951. The exhibition halls at the fair were designed in such a way as not only to display this "astonishing development", but also to portray it as the height of national achievement.¹⁵¹ Unlike the rest of the fair where the displays were rather jumbled, those of industrial development were presented in a relatively ordered fashion. Bearing some resemblance to the construction of the Festival of Britain, but on a much more limited scale, the viewer was supposed to start "at one end of the halls with the products of the primary industries (mining, agriculture, forestry and fisheries)" and then trace "the story of each product as systematically as possible".¹⁵² Under the watchful gaze of the "patron saint of South African business", Jan van Riebeeck, the festival fair was to reveal "the richness and vigour of the young industries of South Africa".¹⁵³

Central to this image of 'national development' was one of progress through science. Science was depicted as the thread which "wove" the country together, from the days of subsistence agriculture, through the growth of markets, to the stage of "industrial development" and the emergence of large towns and cities. In the Hall of Science at the Van Riebeeck festival fair, visitors were invited to view this "great scientific progress".¹⁵⁴ They could see how geologists

¹⁵⁰A Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth Century South Africa*, Oxford (1990), p.164.

¹⁵¹Eric Louw's opening speech, SABC 19/62-65 (52).

¹⁵²*Guide Book Festival Fair*, p.31.

¹⁵³Eric Louw's opening speech, SABC 19/62-65 (52); *Cape Times*, 5 April 1952.

¹⁵⁴Executive Committee Hall of Science, *Science Serves South Africa: An Introduction to the Hall of Science Exhibition*, Van Riebeeck Festival Fair, Cape Town (1952), pp.59, v.

had mapped the minerals of "the country's industrial centres", how the government-funded Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, with its "extensive laboratories" and "large staff", set industrial standards and solved "scientific problems in industry" and how, like Van Riebeeck, veterinary scientists were fighting and conquering "parasites and disease".¹⁵⁵ Indeed, Van Riebeeck's landing, the first instance in this progression towards modernity, was cast as a moment determined by the scientific need to obtain a ready supply of Vitamin C for sailors and traders who plied the routes from Europe to the east in the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁶ The only aspect of science which was not allowed to be displayed at the Van Riebeeck festival was the theory of evolution. Whereas the 'native' showcases constructed an imagined racial evolutionary scale within the 'human race', in the "Hall of Science" evolution, with the consent of the South African Archaeological Society, was banned "as it might offend [the] sensitivities" of those who "truly believe that fossil material represents dead species in a prolific creation but proves nothing more".¹⁵⁷ This enabled 'European' religion to sit, somewhat uneasily, within a rational mode of scientific enquiry and progress, while 'native' belief was cast as superstitious and hence backward.

These interconnected conceptions of 'national development' and 'western progress' were central to the Van Riebeeck festival fair. With such a variety of exhibits on display, however, they were images that were difficult to sustain. Even Van Riebeeck's guiding finger could not direct the visitors as to what they should see and experience. Unfortunately, for those who wanted the festival fair to focus on secondary industry and scientific progress, these halls attracted little attention. Of the £416.19.10 spent on producing 5 000 booklets for the Hall of Science, for instance, only £36 was recovered from sales.¹⁵⁸ Instead, when the festival gates opened each morning there was a rush to be first in queue at the gold mining pavilion. There was a lot of interest from the festival crowds in the human showcases, as well, particularly with the bushmen at the South-West Africa pavilion. Not only did crowds want to see and

¹⁵⁵*Science Serves South Africa*, pp.v, vi, 44. See also Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, *Exhibit of the CSIR: Van Riebeeck Festival*, Pretoria (1952).

¹⁵⁶*Science Serves South Africa*, p.v.

¹⁵⁷Goodwin, 'The Van Riebeeck Festival Fair', p.53.

¹⁵⁸F G Holliman, Secretary to the Executive Committee, Liaison Officer, University of Cape Town, to The Secretary, Department of Education, Arts and Science, 7 May 1952, CAD, UOD 2228 E357, vol 4.

touch the bushmen, but they were also interested in what the bushmen thought and had to say. In so doing, instead of simply asserting the 'benefits' of 'civilisation', the human showcases raised the issue of what constituted modernity and progress in South Africa in the 1950s. Was it 'civilised' to put humans on display?

The statistics of crowd sizes at the various exhibits indicate that the three major attractions were the gold pavilion, the diamond pavilion and the bushmen display.¹⁵⁹ People spent hours queuing in order to go and see gold smelted, to take in the experience of going down a gold mine, to be bedazzled by the array of valuable items on display in the Jewel Box in the Diamond Pavilion, and to gaze at the bushmen making bows and arrows. Let us follow the crowds to two of these pavilions, those of the gold mining industry and South-West Africa (where the bushmen were on display), look at what was presented to them, and examine some of their responses to what they saw.

The gold mine at the seaside

From nearly all entrances to the festival fair, the direct path led to plot 98, where, next to Van Riebeeck's birthplace, the huge Transvaal Chamber of Mines' gold pavilion stood.¹⁶⁰ Yet, this pavilion, which became such a huge drawcard, was initially almost withdrawn from the fair because, as was seen in chapter two, the Chamber saw the Van Riebeeck festival as a possible "political manoeuvre" designed to boost the election chances of the Nationalist Party. Only after items in the pageant were revised and floats were altered did the Chamber of Mines decide to set up its pavilion, and to "take the chance of being involved in a political demonstration".¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹Crowd sizes at specific exhibits were reported, on an irregular basis, in the *Cape Times*, *Die Burger* and the *Cape Argus*, between 15 March and 14 April 1952.

¹⁶⁰*The Star*, 12 September 1951.

¹⁶¹Report for the Festival Fair Committee on the Political Aspect of the Transvaal, 1951, CA, A1646, vol 339; *Rand Daily Mail*, 10 July 1951; see chapter two for an analysis of the construction of the historical pageant.

If the decision to set up the mining pavilion was taking a 'chance', then the odds were very short in the Chamber's favour. The Van Riebeeck festival fair presented the Chamber with an ideal 'opportunity' - some might say a golden one - to continue with the massive publicity campaign that it had embarked upon after the Second World War. In the face of the phenomenal growth of secondary industry, government attempts to impose higher taxes and regulate the mining industry, and increased militancy among the African workforce, culminating in the 1946 mineworkers strike, the Chamber moved from a 'private' dialogue, which kept its technological and labour practices strictly confined, to a discourse in which mining and all its operations were knowable to a wider public. Once the public had acquired "self-knowledge" about mining, they would come to the "self-realisation" of the "damaging effect that apparently innocuous legislation, ill-considered regulations and ill-advised taxation can have - and are having - upon the industry from which the community draws so much of its current income". By sharing 'knowledge' and 'facts' with the 'public', the mining industry identified itself as sharing "common interests ... [with] ... the nation".¹⁶²

The 'knowledge' that the public received was carefully regulated through various media. The Chamber of Mines publication, *The Mining Survey*, launched in 1946, contained detailed, illustrated articles about living and working conditions on the mines, the contribution of mines to the South African economy, and technical aspects of mining operations. There was a quiz, entitled "Are You a South African?" to test if one had read one's magazine properly and acquired the "correct" knowledge:

1. During 1944 the mining industry paid South African farmers £1,200,000, £3,400,000, £4,100,000 or £5,600,000? (Page One)
2. Again in 1944, gold mining dividends paid in South Africa were greater than or less than those paid outside the Union by £10,000,000, £1,000,000, £1,800,000 or £2,700,000? (Page Two).¹⁶³

There were five questions in each issue, each question counting 20 marks. A total score of 80% was considered "outstanding", while, if one scored 30% or below one had to question

¹⁶²*The Mining Survey*, A Transvaal Chamber of Mines Publication, PRD Series no2, 1,1 (April, 1946), inside front cover.

¹⁶³*The Mining Survey* (April 1946), pp.16, 20. The answers are: (1) £5,600,00 (2) £1,800,000 more.

whether one was really a South African.¹⁶⁴ What the Chamber defined as 'correct knowledge' about the mining industry was considered the defining feature of one's nationhood.

Alongside the use of publications as a means of opening up the mining industry and controlling knowledge about its operations, the Chamber arranged for people to see the mines 'for themselves'. Underground mine tours had been in operation since 1926, but from 1946 they were extended and regularised with the Chamber transporting visitors to and from the mine. When the visitors arrived at the mine shaft, they were fitted out in protective clothing after which they went into the cage to begin their descent. Standing at the top of the shaft there was a "feeling that is a mixture of nervousness and excitement, very like the feeling one gets waiting for one's first plane to take off". Then, the cage lurched and it was down at "breakneck speed", past "brilliantly lit stations", to reach the workings.¹⁶⁵ Although some visitors experienced a "sick feeling in the stomach", the *Mining Survey* assured its readers that there was "no unpleasant sinking feeling".¹⁶⁶ Once the visitors had crawled along the dark stope, they were able to witness the miners at work:

See, there they are, a white miner and his black assistants! See how their bodies shine, how the sweat pours down face and neck and arms! One of the black men is lying under the drill, guiding it with his foot, and drilling holes in the rock wall. In these holes will be placed charges of dynamite, and when all of us have retired to a safe distance, the charges will be detonated. Then the rock will come tumbling down, and the whole mine will seem to shake and tremble, filling us again with that feeling that is a compound of excitement and fear.¹⁶⁷

Safely returned to the surface, and imbued with confidence of "seasoned mineworkers", visitors were invited to visit selected "native quarters", which they, almost inevitably, found to be "scrupulously clean and pleasant" and where "great attention" was paid to the "health and recreation" of the workers.¹⁶⁸ Even a "Zulu chief", Bhekizizwe Zondi, was invited to see

¹⁶⁴*The Mining Survey* (April 1946), p.16.

¹⁶⁵A Paton, *South Africa and Her People*, London (1957), p.48.

¹⁶⁶Paton, *South Africa*, p.48; *The Mining Survey* (September 1953), p.23.

¹⁶⁷Paton, *South Africa*, p.49.

¹⁶⁸*The Mining Survey* (September 1953), pp.25, 20-22; G Rich (Form 111A) 'Tribal Dances', *Athlone Girls High School Magazine* (1952), p.6; Paton, *South Africa*, p.50.

how "his people" lived on the mines. He "was well pleased with what he saw" and concluded that "his people" were "very well cared for and contented".¹⁶⁹ By making knowledge public, and carefully selecting and representing it, the Chamber was not only asserting its centrality but also deflecting growing criticism, especially internationally, "that Natives are taken by the scruff of the neck and flung down a mine where they stay until they die".¹⁷⁰

By the early, 1950s 3 500 visitors per year were going on underground tours. Although they were very valuable in terms of "increasing the public knowledge" about the industry, the small numbers on these tours limited their impact. Fairs and exhibitions, which were "for the many", were an occasion to allow even more people to become aware of "the high prestige the gold mining industry enjoys in South African affairs".¹⁷¹ Between March 1952 and September 1953 the Chamber of Mines spent vast amounts of money in setting up pavilions at exhibitions. In addition to the £120 000 pavilion at the Van Riebeeck festival fair, massive exhibits were constructed at the Central African Rhodes Centenary Exhibition in Bulawayo and at the Rand Easter Show in Johannesburg. Almost one million people visited these exhibits, an indication that the Chamber was broadening its campaign of increasing "public knowledge and appreciation" of the gold mining industry.¹⁷²

At the Van Riebeeck festival fair, not only was a large budget allocated by the Chamber for the gold mining pavilion, but a lot of time and planning went into ensuring that the pavilion would attract the crowds through "ingenious" models, presentations, and displays.¹⁷³ The pavilion, on which construction was begun before all others at the fair,¹⁷⁴ contained five central features: a scaled down model of surface operations; a smelting house where gold was

¹⁶⁹*Umteteli Wa Bantu*, 19 January 1952.

¹⁷⁰*Mining Survey* (September 1953), p.27.

¹⁷¹*The Mining Survey* (September 1953), p.2, inside front cover.

¹⁷²*The Mining Survey* (September 1953), inside front cover, pp.1-2. The pavilion at the Rand Easter Show became a permanent exhibit at the Milner Park showgrounds, which schools could visit to find out more about the mining industry.

¹⁷³*The London Magazine*, April 1952.

¹⁷⁴Memo to the Under Secretary for Native Affairs from E W Sampson, Liaison Officer, NAD, 21 September 1951, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 1.

poured every half hour; a visual display of 28 exhibits containing models, charts, photographs and goldware depicting the history of the industry and its value to South Africans; an information desk, where special Van Riebeeck festival information packages about the mining industry were handed out and where "young [white] men" could enquire "about entering this great industry which pays its European employees ... an average wage of £750 a year",¹⁷⁵ and finally, the highlight for many festival goers, a simulated trip underground in a gold mine which was constructed metres away from "where the waves of the Atlantic break over the sands of Table Bay" (see illustration 10).¹⁷⁶

The emphasis at the mining pavilion was on participation, enjoyment and excitement. As a result, crowds were drawn to the pavilion as to a "magnet". According to one official, the 469 024 visitors at the pavilion, a little more than half of the total attendance at the fair, was probably the biggest for any exhibit or show in South Africa. Of those, 104 021 experienced the thrill of 'the underground'.¹⁷⁷ The only other area of the festival where one could possibly have had experienced more excitement was by being "swung end over end, faster and faster" in the "flying jets, looping cars and a moon rocket" at the amusement park.¹⁷⁸ But that cost more money, which many of the festival-goers were reluctant to pay for. "I went into the mine quite a few times. And the things were all free. No entrance fee for this and that".¹⁷⁹

The Chamber of Mines clearly believed that the large numbers at the pavilion at the Van Riebeeck festival contributed to establishing gold mining as a 'national' enterprise for all white South Africans. In the queues at the pavilion,

[t]here were tired looking fathers with babies in arms, mothers tugging children by the hand, schoolboys in excited parties carrying their packets of lunch, Boy Scouts and Voortrekkers, burly farmers in town 'for the show', sailors, soldiers, merchant navy crews, business executives, typist, traffic 'cops' off

¹⁷⁵*Cape Argus*, 13 March 1952.

¹⁷⁶*The Mining Survey* (June 1952); *Transvaal Chamber of Mines, Van Riebeeck Festival Folder*, (Johannesburg, 1952); *Cape Times Magazine*, 22 March 1952.

¹⁷⁷*The Mining Survey* (June 1952), pp.1-2.

¹⁷⁸Victor Perera, *Rites: A Guatemalan Boyhood*, London (1987), p.118; *Guide Book Festival Fair*, p.81.

¹⁷⁹Interview with Rosalie Kleynhans.

duty, and even waiters, still in uniform, who had taken time off from some other pavilions in the show to see the underground mine workings.¹⁸⁰

By bringing all these people together to go 'underground' and gaze upon the "Native mineworkers using jackhammers in the stopes", the Chamber had, it hoped, established a sense of common white South African identity. The "platteland [had] taken the gold-mining industry to its bosom", and the nation, united by gold, could look upon the "natives", who were "foreigners", not part of the South African nation, labour for the "nation".¹⁸¹

While "the mining industry was contending it was a modern day Van Riebeeck",¹⁸² for festival-goers the chance of 'going down' a gold mine, even a simulated one, was, like the mine tours on the Witwatersrand, an experience of excitement, tinged with an element of danger.

At the entrance was a notice to the effect that everyone using this shaft did so at his own risk. This made me feel a little apprehensive, but as there were hundreds of people in the queue behind me, it was too late to turn back. Our party entered the 'lift'.¹⁸³

From there it was "down into the mine", with flashing lights indicating the different levels.

Many people thought we were going down into the depths of the earth, and it really seemed as if we were.¹⁸⁴

Finally the visitors disembarked at the level of the workings, climbed into a little train, went down the stopes, saw "natives working at the rock face", and took photographs to show friends.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰*The Mining Survey* (June 1952), p.4.

¹⁸¹*The Mining Survey* (June 1952), p.4; *The London Magazine*, (April 1952). This was part of the official discourse of 'native policy' in the 1950s, which stressed the idea that "both black and white society are really composed of distinct (and emergent national) units....", Ashforth, *Official Discourse*, p.153.

¹⁸²Rassool and Witz, 'Constructing and Contesting', p.455.

¹⁸³Creswell, 'The Van Riebeeck Festival', p.27.

¹⁸⁴Creswell, 'The Van Riebeeck Festival', p.27

¹⁸⁵Creswell, 'The Van Riebeeck Festival', p.27; *The Mining Survey* (June, 1952), pp.3-4.



Figure 10: Going underground at the gold mine at the seaside, March/April 1952, Cape Times, *The Festival in Pictures*, p.45.

This was a "wonderful" experience for the crowds, not only for the excitement it generated but because it had an "atmosphere of realism", and "authenticity". Entering the lift, the visitor was "filled with the ... awful feeling of claustrophobia". As one 'descended' into the 'depths of the earth', it really "felt like going down".¹⁸⁶ Upon reaching the workings, there was a moment of darkness and "there was a feeling that we were deep underground".¹⁸⁷ Then a cacophony of sounds erupted, "roar[ing]...jackhammers, rumbl[ing]...loaders and the hiss of compressed air". The correspondent from *Die Burger* maintained that it was all so real that "*n mens saam wil sweet met die goed afgerigte naturelle wat die boorhammers in die mynrifgange hanteer*" [one wants to sweat together with the trained natives who are handling the jackhammers in the stopes].¹⁸⁸ Indeed, "the only thing needed to make this model completely realistic", wrote a schoolgirl, "was water".¹⁸⁹

As the festival-goers did not have the opportunity of visiting the 'native compounds' after their visit 'underground', 150 000 information packs, containing a mini-edition of the *Mining Survey*, some "facts" about the industry and a picture booklet entitled *African Contrast*, were distributed.¹⁹⁰ The booklet comprised a series of photographs, with very little text, comparing "kraal" and "compound", with the latter being cast in a progressive light. The 'modern' features of the "native single quarters" were contrasted with the "stilt huts of a kraal", the dark, 'disorganised' "[i]nterior of a Native hut" with a bright, "clean" kitchen and the "primitive practice" of "crude surgery in the kraal" with "modern science" in a "mine Native hospital".¹⁹¹ These photographic images, laid out next to each other, were not only provided as carefully selected visual 'evidence' of labour practices on the mines, but also depicted the

¹⁸⁶Interview with Ronette Olivier, a visitor to the Festival Fair, 2 September 1994.

¹⁸⁷Interview with Rosalie Kleynhans.

¹⁸⁸*Die Burger*, 13 March 1952.

¹⁸⁹J Sandler, 'The Festival', *Rondebosch Boys High School Magazine*, XLVI, 149 (June, 1952), p.38; *Cape Times Magazine*, 22 March 1952; M Cresswell, 'The Festival', p.27; *Die Burger*, 13 March 1952; *The Mining Survey*, (June 1952), p.4.

¹⁹⁰*The Mining Survey* (June, 1952), pp.1-2; *Cape Argus*, 14 March 1952; *Cape Times*, 7 April 1952. The Chamber, intensely aware of the public image, used an electronic eye to keep an accurate count of the number of people who visited the pavilion. *Die Burger*, 13 March 1952.

¹⁹¹*Transvaal Chamber of Mines, Van Riebeeck Festival Brochure, African Contrasts*, pp.1-6.

Chamber and the industry as contributing "to the healthy advancement of the native" man.¹⁹² It was this 'native', trained by the white men on the mines to meet their requirements, who, when he went home to 'his wife' bearing "presents for his family", was, according to the Chamber, automatically bestowing development on "South Africa" and "his people".¹⁹³ In this way, like the Native Affairs Department, the Chamber of Mines associated itself with the modernising project that was claiming to provide "Betterment for the Bantu".

But the visitors at the Van Riebeeck festival fair neither visited the 'native compound' nor went underground. While the tours on the Witwatersrand were carefully selected and sanitised so that the ride in the cage was "smooth" and the workings were "clean", there were still the wet conditions underfoot, the pitch black darkness in the stopes and the narrow shelf-like corridors where the gold was mined.¹⁹⁴ In this sense visitors to the fair were further removed from some of the experiences of mining operations on the Transvaal and Free State goldfields. They did not spend up to eight to ten hours on a shift, they did not experience the heat, darkness, dirt and danger in the stopes.¹⁹⁵ This was an image of the mining industry that had come to feature more prominently in the press in the few years prior to the Van Riebeeck festival, particularly with the opening of Free State gold fields in 1946. There were regular reports of accidents on these mines. In the week before the festival fair opened, 22 miners lost their lives as a result of an explosion and the collapse of a mine shaft. The following week a rockfall at Freddie's North mine in Odendaalsrus killed eight workers.¹⁹⁶ There was a growing sense of disquiet about the safety standards on these mines, especially when the mine management seemed to shift the onus of responsibility to the workers without considering

¹⁹²*Transvaal Chamber of Mines, African Contrasts*, inside back cover.

¹⁹³*Transvaal Chamber of Mines, African Contrasts*, inside back cover.

¹⁹⁴Paton, *South Africa*, p.49; *The Mining Survey* (September 1953), p.25.

¹⁹⁵This is not to argue that the closer one comes to an essential experience the more real it becomes. Indeed, as Ciraj Rassool and I have argued elsewhere, it is this search for the experience of reality that forms the basis of one of the largest image-making productions, the tourist industry. See C Rassool and L Witz, "'South Africa: A World In One Country': Moments in International Tourist Encounters with Wildlife, the Primitive and the Modern', *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines*, 143, xxxvi (1996), pp.335-371.

¹⁹⁶*Cape Argus*, 5 and 6 March 1952; *Cape Times*, 17 and 18 March 1952.

mechanical and structural problems.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, as a schoolboy from Salt River in Cape Town wrote, "*Die Lot Van Die Mynwerker*" [the fate of a mine worker] was very often " 'n eensame graf" [a lonely grave].¹⁹⁸

The visitors to the gold mining pavilion at the Van Riebeeck festival did not experience the daily fear that they might never emerge alive from the depths of the earth. They remained very much on the surface and were not in any danger of rockfalls and sinking shafts. Although the Chamber's "danger sign" at the entrance to the "lift shaft" provided an element of the risqué, visitors were assured of emerging unscathed from their thirty minutes 'underground' with their memories, photographs and a sense that they now knew "what it really was like" to work in a gold mine. Their 'knowledge', like their 'journey', barely scratched the surface.

"This terrible thing"

While the gold mining pavilion commanded a central position at the festival fair, plot 50, in a corner at an entrance gate near Marine Drive, was in far less auspicious location. Yet, during the last two weeks of March and the beginning of April, long queues formed outside this plot which accommodated the pavilion of the South-West African administration. This £20 000 building, with its low-lying "modern" characteristics, displayed colour photographs showing the scenery of South-West Africa, exhibits of the "economic and social development of the territory" and a Bavarian beer garden which served "the famous South-West African beer".¹⁹⁹ A booklet, illustrated with photographs of the Government Buildings, Karakul sheep, diamond mining operations and fish factories was distributed to interested visitors.²⁰⁰ But this is not what the 1 500 people per hour who passed through pavilion on some days came to see. They were much more interested in the 'native section' of the pavilion, where there were

¹⁹⁷*Cape Argus*, 8 March 1952; 4 April 1952.

¹⁹⁸W Christians, 'Die Lot Van Die Mynwerker', *Wesley Training School Magazine* (1952), p.9; *Die Burger*, 5 and 18 March 1952; *Cape Times*, 17 and 18 March 1952.

¹⁹⁹*Windhoek Advertiser*, 22 December 1951.

²⁰⁰*Van Riebeeck Festival South-West Africa 1952*, Cape Town (1952).

"members of South-West African tribes in tribal dress". In particular, they wanted to gaze upon the "full-blooded" bushmen, "the last remnants of this almost extinct aboriginal people".²⁰¹

At the time of the Van Riebeeck festival, most bushmen in South-West Africa had been "tamed" into becoming "useful workers", an "invisible proletariat" living and working on white settler farms. The seventeen Kung bushmen who came to Cape Town, however, were defined as "a pure tribe", coming from north-eastern South-West Africa, beyond the white farming areas. Labelled by the settler population of Namibia as "dishonest" and "wild bushmen", they did not work for the white farmers who were moving into the *Kaukaveld* in increasing numbers but frequently stole their cattle. This 'problem' had to be 'solved' and in the grand South African tradition a commission of enquiry was set up in 1949: the Commission for the Preservation of the Bushmen. The chair of this commission was none other than P J Schoeman, game ranger, anthropologist and writer of hunting tales for children.²⁰²

As the title of the commission indicates the 'problem' was turned on its head from one that deals with the interests of white farmers to one concerned with the 'preservation of the bushmen'. This inversion enabled the commissioners to speak on behalf of the bushmen, while the farming lobby's concerns for greater control of the 'wild bushman' were being more than catered for. Central to this process was the role of Schoeman who, as a 'trained anthropologist', could claim to speak in the interests of the bushman. Schoeman's major concern as a *volkekundige* [anthropologist] at Stellenbosch University in the 1940s had been to find a 'solution' to the 'native problem' which would serve to maintain "the racial purity of the Afrikaners". Using a notion of "racial differentiation" - "that race was linked to the level of civilization, and the nature of life, and that these differences were inherent" - he,

²⁰¹ *Guide Book Festival Fair*, p.55; *Cape Times*, 7 April 1952; *Die Burger*, 26 March 1952; *Windhoek Advertiser*, 22 December 1951.

²⁰² Gordon, *Bushman Myth*, pp.157, 161, 163; *Cape Times*, 29 March 1952; *Die Huisgenoot*, 21 March 1952; *Windhoek Advertiser*, 10 March 1952. (Thanks to Patricia Hayes for the last reference.) The concept of 'a grand tradition of commissions' is borrowed from Ashforth, *Official Discourse*. Schoeman's hunting books for Afrikaans children, in particular his trilogy about Fanie who became the '*Grootwildjagter*' were reprinted almost every year between 1948 and 1960. See for instance, *Fanie se Veldskooldae*, seventh printing, (Johannesburg, 1960), and *Fanie Word Grootwildjagter*, ninth printing (Johannesburg, 1960).

along with other anthropologists at Pretoria and Stellenbosch, had proposed territorial segregation of races in South Africa. By isolating blacks and giving them their own areas with which they could identify, Schoeman maintained, the problem of the miscegenation of the Afrikaners would disappear.²⁰³

This formed the basis of knowledge that Schoeman carried with him into South-West Africa in the 1950s. In speaking for the bushmen, he constantly asserted that they wanted to have a piece of land for themselves where they could live and thereby perpetuate the race. His novel, *Jagters van die Woestynland* [*Hunters of the Desert Land*], which tells about the lives of the 'wild bushmen', the way that they hunt and relates some bushman stories, ends with a plea to the "Wit Vader" [White Father].²⁰⁴

The Ovambo's have their own land.... its name is Ovamboland. Kwangerri have their own land.... it is called Okavango. The Herero's have land. The Bastard people of Rehoboth have land. They all have land where the white man's law looks after them. Only the Bushmen have no land. And we, the Bushmen people, were in this country first. Then, all the land belonged to us.... now we have nothing.... Aau.... Father.... White Father baas Naude.... baas Hoogenhout.... baas Naser.... ask them to listen to the weeping of a race which is very tired of running away. Give us a piece of land too.²⁰⁵

This was all part of the change in official discourse in the 1940s and '50s from seeing 'natives' as a "homogeneous" group, to regarding them as "heterogeneous population categories". It was this newly-discovered "reality" which had to be taken into account when "solving" the "native problem".²⁰⁶ When Schoeman tabled the interim report of the commission in September 1951, the 'solution' he thus recommended was that two bushman reserves be set up in land that the white farmers did not require, one for the Kung and another

²⁰³R J Gordon, 'Serving the Volk with Volkekunde - On the Rise of South African Anthropology' in J Jansen (ed), *Knowledge and Power in South Africa*, (Johannesburg, 1991), pp.84-6. See also J S Sharp, 'The Roots of and Development of Volkekunde in South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 8, 1, (1981), p.19, who argues that the central notion in volkekunde is ethnos theory, "the proposition that mankind is divided into volke and that each volk has its own particular culture".

²⁰⁴P J Schoeman, *Jagters van die Woestynland*, Cape Town, fourth impression, (1961), p.190.

²⁰⁵This quotation is from the translated version of P J Schoeman's *Jagters van die Woestynland*, *Hunters of the Desert Land*, Howard Timmins, Cape Town (nd), p.159. Col. P I Hoogenhout was Administrator of South-West Africa, J Naser, Secretary for South-West Africa and Major Naude was police commander of the territory. They had paved the way for Schoeman to enter the land of 'wild bushman' to do research for the book.

²⁰⁶Ashforth, *Official Discourse*, p.153.

for the Heikom. In this way the 'wild bushmen' could be controlled and their "race preserved".²⁰⁷

A few months after the tabling of the interim report, Schoeman and R F Morris, the chief Native Commissioner in Okavango, set about selecting a group of bushmen to take to the Van Riebeeck festival. Although in the preliminary arrangements for the fair the bushmen were included in discussions over the NAD Bantu pavilion, it was decided that they would form an "independent exhibit of primitive cultures in S.W.A".²⁰⁸ Here there would be no displays of education and progress "as the other provinces were so much ahead of them".²⁰⁹ Instead, the aim was to show the bushmen in "natural surroundings" and thereby to "depict a phase in the history of Africa that is fast fading". The only way that this phase could ultimately be retained, "for themselves and for prosperity", according to Schoeman, was that the bushmen be placed in a reserve when they returned home from the festival in Cape Town. The bushmen were going to be shown as a "dying race" and he, Schoeman, was to be both their protector and ensurer of their survival through the setting up of reserves.²¹⁰

Such an ahistorical history appealed to officials in the NAD and the Department of the Interior, who had initially expressed reservations that the bushman display was contravening the 1939 principle of prohibiting "*sulke vertonings*" [such performances] in other countries where the issue of maintaining control had been paramount.²¹¹ In this case though it was felt that the purpose of the display was not to make a monetary profit, but to give the "*regte historiese agtergrond*" [correct historical background]. This, according to the Secretary for

²⁰⁷Gordon, *Bushman Myth*, p.165.

²⁰⁸Bruwer Blignaut, NAD Windhoek to Wyatt Sampson, Liaison Officer, NAD, Pretoria, 12 September 1951, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400 Part 1; Summarised minutes of a committee meeting of provincial chief inspectors of Native education, 27 September 1951, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400, Part 1.

²⁰⁹Summarised minutes of a committee meeting of provincial chief inspectors of Native education, 27 September 1951, CAD, NTS 9787, 987/400, Part 1.

²¹⁰*Cape Times*, 29 March, 22 March 1952.

²¹¹Memo from Minister of Native Affairs, H F Verwoerd to Secretary Native Affairs, W M Eiselen, 11 March 1952, CAD, NTS 9788, 987/400 Part 111.

Native Affairs, was similar to the other 'native exhibits' in "*ons paviljoen*" [our pavilion].²¹² Moreover, it fitted in with government plans to incorporate South-West Africa into South Africa. These plans, which attempted to counter the mounting international criticism for the discriminatory racial policies of the South Africans in the territory and its violation of the terms of the United Nations mandate, based their claims for extended authority on their assertion that, like in South Africa, the South African government was 'preserving', 'protecting' and 'bettering' the 'natives' of South-West Africa. The Native Affairs Department, portrayed in the government's proposals as the "special Department of State to look after Native interests",²¹³ therefore had no objections to the bushmen being presented, under the auspices of their 'protector', P J Schoeman, in the South-West Africa pavilion at the Van Riebeeck festival fair.²¹⁴

A meeting was arranged with 140 bushmen at Caudum, sixty miles south of the Okavango river and twenty miles from the border with Botswana. There are no indications of how this group came together at Caudum. There was initially no clamouring to make the trip to the festival, but then material incentives were offered:

Ons sal elkeen wat gaan, twee sjiellings en ses pennies per dag betaal. Soveel geld ... Kyk ... Ons sal vir elkeen drie nuwe komberse gee. Sulkes soos hierdie ... Kyk Ons sal vir hulle tabak, sout, vleis, melk, mielie-meel en suiker gee. [We will pay everyone who goes two shillings per day. So much money ... look ... We will give everyone three new blankets. Like these ... Look ... We will give them tobacco, salt, meat, milk, maize meal and sugar.]²¹⁵

'Volunteers' came forward and from the larger group 17 were chosen to go to Cape Town. Schoeman claimed that he had chosen these bushmen because he, as an anthropologist, knew that they were racially closest to the Cape bushmen that Van Riebeeck had encountered - "*kleinerige geeletjies*" [small yellow ones]. The anthropological evidence on which Schoeman

²¹²Secretary of Native Affairs to Secretary of Interior, circa 11 March 1952, CAD, NTS 9788, 987/400 Part 111.

²¹³*South West Africa and the Union of South Africa: The History of a Mandate*, Government publication, Pretoria (circa 1946), p.98.

²¹⁴Secretary of Native Affairs to Secretary of Interior, circa 11 March 1952, CAD NTS 9788, 987/400 Part 111.

²¹⁵*Die Huisgenoot*, 21 March 1952.

was able to make this claim is unknown. But by presenting the choice as based on 'knowledge', rather than on a random selection of those who were prepared to or were cajoled into going he validated the trip to the Van Riebeeck festival as "scientific", "historic", and in the best interest of "preserving the bushman race".²¹⁶

Soon the bushmen were on their 1 800 mile journey to Cape Town. They clambered into a three ton truck, and were driven to the headquarters of the Native Commissioner in Runtu. There they were given a medical inspection by Dr Werner Kuschke, who found that the state of their teeth indicated a deficiency of Vitamin C. From there it was back into the truck for the drive to Windhoek, followed by a long train journey, ultimately arriving at Cape Town station on 7 March. P J Schoeman led the bushmen out onto the platform and introduced them to the press. He announced that the leader of the group, whom he had chosen, was a man called Cin Cau. The eldest member of the group was a woman of seventy and the youngest, a baby named Non Ca. He said they had been well cared for on the way down and fed with mealie meal and meat. They had also tasted black coffee, which they liked, claimed Schoeman, and also grapes, which "they love[d]".²¹⁷

In the following four weeks, Schoeman bestrode the Cape Town stage as "preserver", "protector" and "father" of his group of "little men and women". He represented himself as their "security", the man they could "love and trust". The 17 bushmen lived in a single room behind the South-West Africa pavilion, where they were provided with mattresses. At times, when the weather would permit, they chose to sleep out of doors around a fire. They were fed on a diet consisting of meat, vegetables, mealie meal, bread and milk, which, although it was not their usual food, was 'scientifically' approved by Prof Brock of the University of Cape Town's medical school. The white officials also had rooms at the back of the pavilion which enabled them to watch over the bushmen. In an inversion, which had distinct similarities to the appointment of the Commission for the Preservation of Bushmen in 1949, the whites were not there to oversee the bushman but to give them "a greater sense of security

²¹⁶*Cape Times*, 7 and 29 March 1952; *Die Huisgenoot*, 21 March 1952; *Die Burger*, 10 March 1952.

²¹⁷*Die Burger*, 8 and 10 March 1952; *Cape Argus*, 7 March 1952; *Die Huisgenoot*, 21 March 1952.

in their strange surroundings". If they did not stay there, the officials maintained, "the Natives would feel abandoned and become unhappy".²¹⁸

But Schoeman was much more than merely a preserver and protector of the bushmen in Cape Town. He almost totally controlled what they did, what they experienced, what they felt and what they said. He wrote in *Die Huisgenoot* that although they were wary of making the trip to Cape Town in what, according to Schoeman, they called the "*swart duisendpoot-ding wat klippe vreet en rook*" [black millipede thing that smokes and eats stones], they were later very enthusiastic, acting like a bunch of teenagers who were going on a picnic. In Cape Town he arranged regular excursions for the bushmen into the countryside, in order, he said, for them to feel much more at home.²¹⁹ Later, when he took them to the University of Cape Town's medical school for blood tests, he said that they were very brave and "even the children never flinched". They were taken to see a movie and "were particularly delighted with a sequence of a tortoise". Correspondents from local newspapers were invited into the 'bushman enclosure' for private viewings. On the basis of his "scientific" knowledge, Schoeman would, in his "quiet voice", give "meaning and a background of space and sky to the Bushman there". He told the reporters all about their history and legends and then asked the bushmen certain questions, after which he would report their replies. He asked one bushman what he thought of women:

Die vrou ... sy is soos die gras wat afgevreet word en altyd weer groei; sy is soos 'n fontein wat vuilgetrap word, en altyd weer skoonloop; sy is soos die rooidag, wat altyd oor die donker nag seevier. [A woman is like the grass that is eaten and then grows again; she is a fountain that becomes polluted and then runs cleanly; she is like a red day that always triumphs over the darkness of night.]²²⁰

For someone who did not understand the language the bushmen spoke and had to rely upon an interpreter, Schoeman's knowledge of what the bushmen said and felt was remarkable. Yet his authority was never questioned by the reporters, who came out of the enclosure feeling

²¹⁸*Cape Times*, 27 March and 19 April 1952.

²¹⁹*Die Huisgenoot*, 21 March 1952.

²²⁰*Die Burger*, 8 March 1952.

that they had developed a "new understanding", and now yearned for a return to the days of "pure and ancient Africa".²²¹

The 'protection' which Schoeman thus gave to 'his bushmen' in Cape Town enabled him to exercise power over the knowledge that the public received about the bushmen. This knowledge was only about the 'ancient history', 'folklore', 'religion' and 'legends', which were, like the people, dying out, almost 'naturally'. There was nothing about how the bushman had become a 'dying race' through a process of extermination by settlers in Namibia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There was nothing about how most bushmen in Namibia were, in the 1950s, barely managing to survive on settler farms. By silencing the processes of genocide, and casting the knowledge of the bushmen in the mould of a curious unchanging society which was in danger of extinction, and therefore had to be saved, Schoeman was situating the bushmen into a discourse of nationing. In these terms the 'solution' to the 'problem' of the 'wild bushmen' of Namibia, was to maintain their 'purity' - and the 'purity of Africa' - by setting up reserves. Schoeman therefore became the knight in shining armour, who had "the cause of the tiny men" at heart, and was constantly on patrol against "lurking serpents", or "wounded elephants", in order to "preserve their [the bushmen's] rapidly diminishing numbers".²²²

While Schoeman could largely control the images that were emerging from these private viewings of the bushmen, his power was considerably lessened when it came to the public showings at the festival fair. From 14 March the bushmen would sit for hours on end, patiently crafting bows and arrows and making necklaces from ostrich shells, while thousands of visitors gazed upon them. Yet, in this silence the voices of the bushmen began to be heard. Firstly, to the disappointment of thousands of onlookers and in spite of prior assurances that the bushmen were so eager that they would even "dance on the station" if allowed to do so, they did not dance for the spectators, because, according to their overseers, "it might tax their

²²¹*Die Huisgenoot*, 21 March 1952; *Cape Argus*, 12 March 1952; *Cape Times*, 19 March 1952; *Die Burger*, 8 March 1952; *Cape Times*, 27 March 1952.

²²²*Cape Times*, 27 March 1952. The silencing of the processes of genocide in both popular representations and anthropological studies of the bushmen is a central point of Robert Gordon's study, *The Bushman Myth*.

strength". Then, after a few days sitting endlessly doing very little, they became "*moeg van die sit*" [tired of sitting] and only appeared at very specific hours: from 10.00 in the morning to 12.30 and then in the afternoon, from 3.00 (or sometimes as late 4.30) to 5.30. On some days the bushmen were not on view at all because they were "feeling the strain". The result was that queues of 200 to 300 yards long would form for hours before the 'compound' opened. Frustration levels reached breaking point, people jumped the queue and pushed others out the way, and the police were called in to keep control.²²³ When the bushmen were supposed to be taken for the sea for a swim, they did not go, leaving the waiting press in the howling wind, getting their "eyes, ears and mouths [filled] with sand". Finally, to the chagrin of Schoeman, the bushmen started accepting gifts of food and money from the spectators. Feeling his authority as 'protector of the bushman' being undermined, he issued a statement calling on the public to stop offering them presents. "The Bushmen were being well fed and well paid", he maintained, and, moreover, "it was unfair that one should receive a gift and not the others".²²⁴

If there were problems controlling the bushmen, Schoeman had even more difficulties with the spectators. Despite the presence of Lochline Louw, whose role it was to inform the public about the bushmen and to intervene when the visitors "*hulle te veel hinder met 'n afnemery*" [annoyed them too much when taking photographs], the crowds stared for hours, touched their "olive skins", lifted up their clothes, pulled their hair and persisted in feeding the bushmen. One schoolgirl found it all "*komieklik*" [comic], while another, who represented her impressions vicariously through the eyes of "a little picannin", told how he came out of the exhibit "his eyes full of dreams of spears and arrows".²²⁵ Schoeman was becoming so frustrated that he began wondering who was more civilised. "*Die Boesmans tree honderd persent beskaafd teenoor die feesgangers op, maar sommige feesgangers wys dat hulle glad*

²²³Cape Argus, 8 April 1952; Windhoek Advertiser, 11 March 1952.

²²⁴Cape Times, 15, 18, 26 March and 1 April 1952; Die Burger, 17 March 1952; Cape Argus 29 and 31 March 1952.

²²⁵D Buxman (Std 10), 'Die Jan van Riebeeck Feeskou' and P Mortelamn (Std 10), 'September's Visit to the Festival', *The Wynberg Girl's High School Magazine* (1952), pp.33, 35.

nie beskaafd is nie" [The Bushmen are acting one hundred percent in a civilised way towards the festival goers, but some festival goers are showing that they are certainly not civilised].²²⁶

A sense of outrage began to filter through some sections of the press. "Scandalized" from Milnerton, found the display of "non-European men and women ... as exhibits in a human zoo" repulsive and called for the immediate closure of these "kraals". The *Cape Times* gave space to a statement by the Franchise Action Committee, which labelled the bushman display "an insult and an affront to the dignity and self-respect of the 10 000 000 non-European people". *The Torch*, newspaper of the Non-European Unity Movement, reported on how the bushmen were deeply shocked at the way the crowds were treating them. A letter in the *Cape Argus* questioned whether the bushman display was progressive:

At the Festival one may be able to see a lot of progress as far as machinery and industry are concerned, but from a humanitarian point of view I failed to see any progress when I looked at the little group of unhappy Bushmen huddled together while thousands walked closely past and stared at them as if they were monkeys in a zoo.²²⁷

The bushman display, instead of highlighting the 'progress of the nation', or indeed the need to 'preserve the bushman', was thus beginning to raise questions about the fundamental assumptions of the 'white nation's' claim to modernity. In the words of *The Torch*, when it was heard that fellow human beings were to be displayed like wild animals, "*ware beskaafde mense dwars deur die wereld se blood [sic] het gekook*" [the blood of truly civilised people throughout the world began to boil].²²⁸

The bushman, also began to 'speak out'. Not only were they "deeply shocked" at the way festival goers were treating them, but they were also finding the "white man's curiosity amazing". They asked their interpreter, "Why are the White people like baboons?". The resistance press, partly picking up on this, began to portray the bushmen within a tradition of resistance. *The Torch* called the bushmen - whom they labelled the Batwa - the world's "greatest hunters", who never surrendered, and "not once did they negotiate for peace". The

²²⁶*Die Burger*, 15 March 1952; *The Torch*, 25 March 1952; *Cape Times*, 18 March 1952.

²²⁷*Cape Argus*, 25 March 1952.

²²⁸*Cape Argus*, 5 April, 21 March 1952; *Cape Times*, 20 March 1952; *The Torch*, 25 March 1952.

Guardian, using the report from the *Cape Argus* on how the bushmen saw their onlookers, produced a cartoon which "depicted the bushmen gazing at the long-necked, short-limbed, white 'baboons', clamouring for attention, while the bushmen remarked, "I believe that if you annoy Baboons they're quite dangerous". The colonial gaze had been reversed and the bushman turned into heroes of resistance (see illustration 11).²²⁹

By the beginning of April, the bushmen were becoming very bored with the festival and did not want to stay on for the week the fair was extended. Moreover, they were unable to sell any more bows and arrows and beads to the public as they did not have any more of the necessary materials. On 7 April, after almost 170 000 people had seen them at the festival fair, they packed their bags for the return trip home. The disgruntled expectant visitors were informed that the bushmen had become scared of Table Mountain's table cloth, the "big white cloud that came down the mountain and then stopped and then suddenly went away".²³⁰ The bushmen were none too sorry to say goodbye to all the those "monkeys who did nothing but stare at them". Schoeman reserved an entire third class coach for them and together they bade farewell to what the bushmen labelled "that terrible thing", the Van Riebeeck festival fair.²³¹

"History! Van Riebeeck! Forget it!"

Even before the doors to the Van Riebeeck festival fair had been shut, the pavilions torn down and the railway sheds restored to their intended function, the exhibitors, who had spent vast amounts of money on their pavilions, were "more than satisfied" with the number of visitors and the interest they had shown in their displays. By 15 April, when the fair was over, there was even more enthusiasm. E G Jansen, the Governor General, thought that it showed "the rest of the world the progress made in South Africa". A Cape Town clothing manufacturer was pleased that thousands of people had "seen and handled our clothes". Above

²²⁹*Cape Argus*, 18 March 1952; *The Torch*, 18 and 25 March 1952; *The Guardian*, 27 March 1952; Rassool and Witz, 'Constructing and Contesting', p.465.

²³⁰Interview with Yvonne Taylor.

²³¹*Cape Times*, 3 April 1952; *Cape Argus*, 7 April 1952.

all, the Van Riebeeck festival was proclaimed as a "sweeping success" and an "example of national unity".²³²

Yet the carefully constructed national project had often assumed a very different character from that which the festival organisers as a whole had attempted to sustain in 1952. On Cape Town's foreshore Van Riebeeck was very often in danger of being subsumed by the 'fun of the fair'. "We didn't go to the festival with the idea of celebrating the landing of Jan van Riebeeck", said one festival-goer, "the furthest thing from our minds was Jan van Riebeeck. We were there to enjoy ourselves."²³³ "I didn't feel, Whoopi! he's a hero," claimed another. "History! Van Riebeeck! Forget it! Whose that? No, that didn't matter to me."²³⁴

Moreover, the exhibits at the fair, from the gold mining pavilion to the bushman enclosure, which were sometimes quite unsystematically conceptualised as part of a 'national project', often took on different meanings. The gold mining pavilion, at times, turned into little more than a fun fair ride at which some 'knowledge' was acquired, while the visit to the bushmen was seen as "*komieklik*" [comic] for some. Overall, according to a schoolgirl from Cape Town, the fair "*het nie baie gehelp in die ontwikkeling van Suid-Afrika nie, maar dit was die grootste skouspel wat nog in ons land deur mensehande vertoon is*" [did not contribute very much to the development of South Africa, but it was the biggest spectacle displayed by human hands in our country].²³⁵

The '*fees vir die oog*' [feast/festival for the eye] was a "producerly text" where, in order to widen the audience and seemingly loosen the bounds of social control, the sensual activities of the body, rather than "the mind and its sense", became the central focus. It was the "bodily pleasures" that offered "carnavalesque, evasive, liberating practices" and, in so doing occasioned the "parody, subversion, or inversion" of the displays by festival goers and

²³²Cape Times, 7 and 15 April 1952.

²³³Interview with Shirley Broomberg.

²³⁴Interview with Yvonne Taylor.

²³⁵Buxmann, 'Die Jan van Riebeeck Feesskou', p.33.



Figure 11: "I Believe If You Annoy Baboons They're Quite Dangerous", *The Guardian*, 27 March 1952.

participants.²³⁶ The Van Riebeeck festival fair was seen through a multitude of eyes, as spectators, participants and organisers all surveyed different vistas and created a multiplicity of meanings for the activities which took place on the foreshore between mid-March and mid-April 1952. To impute total social control from the construction of these images of the 'nation' would be to fall into exactly the same trap as the *Cape Times* which confidently asserted that, "All Loved the [Van Riebeeck festival] Fair".²³⁷

²³⁶Fiske, *Reading the Popular*, p.6; See also Ronald Walter's discussion on proposals by the Disney Corporation to build a history theme park, where he argues that the meanings audiences create for themselves must not be determined by 'reading into' the images displayed, R G Walters, 'In Our Backyard', *Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter*, 33, 3 (March 1995), pp.3-4.

²³⁷*Cape Times*, 7 and 12 April 1952.

CHAPTER FIVE

LOCAL AND NATIONAL PASTS: THE JOURNEYS OF THE MAIL COACHES THROUGH THE EASTERN CAPE.

The displays of the tercentenary festival of 1952 were centred on the figure of Van Riebeeck as the founder of a nation based on racial exclusivity with Cape Town as its place of origin. To make this Van Riebeeck spatially national, the organisers of the tercentenary of 'founding' perceived it necessary to move beyond the geographical limits of Cape Town and its immediate environs and to ensure the participation of other locales in his festival. On the one hand, this involved inducing groups to relocate temporarily to the Cape in order to assume various roles. Those who controlled and managed larger towns and cities in South Africa, for instance, were approached by the festival organisers to stage exhibits at the festival fair. Others were asked if they would be willing to sponsor and construct floats for the pageant of the past in Adderley Street. For most, though, this invitation meant taking up residence in the temporary accommodation in the three tent villages at Goodwood, Rosebank and Belville to perform in the mass displays and/or witness the events of the festival. On the other hand, there were plans afoot to take Van Riebeeck to various towns in South Africa prior to his landing in April 1952. The white inhabitants of these locales were encouraged to establish their own Van Riebeeck committees, to organise local pageants and to write histories of the towns.¹ These local commemorations which selected moments of origin to designate 'own founding', within the larger framework of 'national beginning', were intended to provide these towns with the opportunity to become part of the festival and to show that "the rest of South Africa ... ha[d] an interest in the fact that Van Riebeeck landed in 1652".² Moreover, with the Cape Town City Council displaying, at times, a somewhat lukewarm response to Van

¹*The Star*, 11 July 1951; Report of the Activities of the Mail Coach Organising Committee for the Van Riebeeck Festival, US, Thom, Box 49.

²Letter to the *Rand Daily Mail*, 12 July 1951.

Van Riebeeck,³ these local celebrations were vital to ensuring that the festival gathered and sustained its momentum.

Linking the movement towards Cape Town and Van Riebeeck's excursions throughout South Africa were the journeys of the mail coaches organised by the *Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereniging* (ATKV) [Afrikaanse Language and Cultural Society]. From the beginning of January 1952 seven mail coaches departed from their respective starting points - Ohrigstad, Windhoek, Beit Bridge, Groblersdal, Sabie, Amsterdam and Umtata - to travel through nearly sixty major towns in South Africa, cover some 11 000 miles and arrive in Cape Town on 30 March to usher in the festival week.⁴ As the mail coaches passed through the towns en route to Cape Town, "great and impressive festivals" were organised by "all sections of the European population". The arrival of the mail coach provided a "tangible copulative incentive" for a frenzy of local festivities. The coach would enter the town, the mayor would welcome it in front of the town hall and a local history written by 'local experts', schoolteachers and clergy would be presented to the "*ritmeester*" [journey master] for "conveyance" to Cape Town to be deposited in the South African library. A float procession and a local pageant organised on the day to coincide with the coach's arrival would take place. In the evening, the town council would hold a banquet "in honour of the mail coach personnel" at which "the proverbial hospitality of our nation [would be] strikingly evinced". After spending the night, the coach, refreshed by the evening's proceedings, would continue on its way, not to deliver the mail but to gather the nation and revitalise its local History.⁵

The journeys of the mail coaches began on 4 January in a remote corner of the north eastern-Transvaal, some 2 000 kilometres away from the scene of Van Riebeeck's landing at Granger Bay, at the "ruined Voortrekker town" of Ohrigstad.⁶ Before the journey began, 23 speeches were made and an historical pageant consisting of the Dromedaris, President Kruger in exile

³See Chapter two for a discussion on the response of the Cape Town City Council to the Van Riebeeck festival.

⁴Report Mail Coach Organising Committee, US, Thom, Box 49.

⁵Report Mail Coach Organising Committee, US, Thom, Box 49.

⁶*Port Elizabeth Evening Post*, 8 January 1952.

in Switzerland, Boer War generals and a group of Transvaal farmers paraded around the town's stadium. On centre stage was D F Malan, the prime minister, who entered the town's arena "comfortably seated" aboard a replica of the Dromedaris. As the light faded, he gave the signal for the Van Riebeeck festival to begin.⁷

Hier in die geskiedkundige Ohrigstad staan ons nou aan die begin van ons landswye Van Riebeeck feesviering wat op 6 April in Kaapstad, ons moederstad, sy hoogtepunt bereik. [Here, in the historical town of Ohrigstad, we are standing at the start of our nation-wide festival celebrations, which will reach its zenith on 6 April in Cape Town, our mother city].⁸

A girl and boy from the Voortrekker youth then lit their torches from a huge bonfire, the coach horn sounded, the *Lied Van Jong Suid-Afrika* [Song of Young South Africa] was sung and the long journey to the beaches of Table Bay and "Darkest Africa full of Lions" started.⁹

As the coaches "started rolling southwards", local festivities were organised.¹⁰ Durban laid on a cavalcade which followed an historical narrative from 'barbarity' to 'civilisation', "confirming to the procedure which ... [was] being adopted throughout the Union" and in the streets of Cape Town. It started when Natal was "Unknown" and the "ancestral prototypes of the war-lords Umsilikazi, Shaka and Dingaan carried on their internecine warfare, "eating-up the less aggressive smaller tribes" and moved inexorably towards the development of roads, maritime links and the sugar industry as the "Wheels of progress" turned. Written out of Natal's past, as it had been from the national history, was "the unhappy history of fighting between Boer and Briton in the early 1840s" to be replaced by a Thompson-Uys type encounter when the trek leader Piet Retief met the British settlers in 1837.¹¹ Johannesburg,

⁷Port Elizabeth Evening Post, 8 January 1952; The Departure of the mail coach from Ohrigstad, 4 January 1952, SABC 28/83-4(52).

⁸Speech of D F Malan, at start of Van Riebeeck Festival, 4 January 1952, from Bloemrus Niewoudt, *Geskiedenis in Klank: Die Van Riebeeck Fees in Herenning Geroep*, 6 April 1976, SABC, T 76/54.

⁹The Departure of the mail coach from Ohrigstad, 4 January 1952, SABC 28/83-4(52); 'Van Riebeeckfees Te Ohrigstad', memo issued by P D Rautenbach, Organising Secretary, Ohrigstad, 19 November 1951, CAD, BNS 1/1/741 342/73; Gwen Pritchard, 'The Landing of Van Riebeeck', *Wynberg Girl's High School Magazine* (August 1952), p.37.

¹⁰Report Mail Coach Organising Committee, US, Thom, Box 49.

¹¹Durban Festival Committee, *Van Riebeeck Tercentenary Celebrations Durban Festival* (February 1952), pp.3, 13-21.

in addition to a "Grand Procession" where Van Riebeeck was paraded alongside a "Group of diggers" and a "Tribute to South African Womanhood" - but without the Boer War and the Jameson Raid - also presented an historical tableau of events in South Africa's past from Dias to Unification at the Great Hall of the University of the Witwatersrand.¹² On Port Elizabeth's King's Beach there was a re-enactment of the landing of the 1820 settlers.¹³ In Grahamstown, a float procession in the streets welcomed the coach 'Settlers' "on its jolly, jolting way to Cape Town".¹⁴ At the Border Rugby Union grounds in East London, more than 250 people acted in a pageant celebrating the founding of the town, with Lt Col John Baillie playing the part of his great grandfather "who hoisted the British flag on Signal Hill and proclaimed the annexation of Port Rex".¹⁵ Through these local Van Riebeeck festivals, from Ohrigstad to Cape Town, "throughout the length and breadth of the country", a "*goue ketting van vriendskap en eenheid*" [golden chain of unity and friendship] was to bind the country together through the festival slogan, "We Build a Nation".¹⁶ The organisers were so confident that, as the coaches covered "*feitlik elke deel van die land*" [nearly every part of the country]¹⁷ the festival would assume "a national character" and that "*daar seker nie baie meer in ons land wees wat Ohrigstad erens in Suid-Wes Afrika wil gaan soek nie*" [there will not be many who will again go and search for Ohrigstad somewhere in South West Africa].¹⁸

At the start of the journey in Ohrigstad, the radio commentator enthused over how the festivities were "all organised locally" and that, except for a few "visiting celebrities", those

¹²*Souvenir Programme of the Johannesburg Van Riebeeck Festival and Mail Coach Celebrations*, Van Riebeeck Festival Committee (Johannesburg), 1952; Minutes of Council of the University of the Witwatersrand, 30 November 1951, Wits (A).

¹³*Port Elizabeth Evening Post*, 7 March 1952; *Eastern Province Herald*, 7 March 1952.

¹⁴*Kingswood College Magazine*, Grahamstown, (1952), p.43.

¹⁵*East London Daily Dispatch* 23 February 1952.

¹⁶Report of Mail Coach Organising Committee, US, Thom, Box 49; Speech of D F Malan, 4 January 1952, SABC, T 76/54.

¹⁷*Official Festival Programme*, pp.100, 88, 69; Suid-Afrikaanse Spoorwee en Hawens, 'Verkeerswee: Die Verhaal van 300 Jaar van Vervoer in Suid Afrika' (1952).

¹⁸Speech of Dr A P van der Merwe, Chair of the Van Riebeeck Festival Committee, at the start of the Van Riebeeck Festival, 4 January 1952, SABC, T 76/54.

in attendance were mostly "local people from the district roundabout".¹⁹ But from the moment the journey of the mail coaches began, and Ohrigstad was criticised for eulogising the Voortrekker past and for not inviting the Boy Scouts to attend the opening ceremony, the content of these local pasts was as heavily disputed as the scenes of the 'national past' in Cape Town.²⁰ They had to be negotiated and ordered to take account of the discord of particular locales as each area was meant to make its contribution to the festivities. The concerns and questions of how a "composite representation of a few of the highlights of the early history ... of [localities] could also be depicted" emerged.²¹ How much local content should be included? What was a local event? What was a national event? Who determined the spatial boundaries of the past? What happened if the local past did not fit the national one? Just as the content and form of the 'People's Pageant' had to be mediated carefully so the mail coaches had to negotiate many hazardous roads on their journeys to these local/national pasts. It was through their excursion to the towns en-route that the past was bounded into local and national narratives as communities participated (or did not participate) in the journey of settler history.

By examining the production of local history through these dangerous journeys this chapter approaches places, their identities and their pasts, as not being characterised by some sort of internal essence. Instead it is about how places cohere, how they are defined, named, bounded, identified with, historicised and how all of these are always shifting, "temporary, uncertain and in process".²² In the constant construction and reconstruction of these spatial identities, the making of histories becomes crucial as they seek to fix time, locating the individual in the present of a place, with a defined past and a future. Of these histories, those that become dominant, according to Massey, are able to assert and maintain themselves through the "the exercise of power relations" - political, legal and physical force - often on a national and/or

¹⁹The Departure of the mail coach from Ohrigstad, 4 January 1952, SABC 28/83-4(52).

²⁰*Port Elizabeth Evening Post*, 8 and 9 January 1952; Report of the Mail Coach Organising Committee, US, Thom, Box 49.

²¹Notes taken at a meeting held in the Council Chamber, East London, 12 October 1951, to establish an East London Van Riebeeck Festival Committee, CA; 3 ELN, vol 1439, Ref 50/2059.

²²D Massey, 'Places and Their Pasts', *History Workshop Journal*, 39 (1995), p.186; See also F Driver and R Samuel, 'Rethinking the Idea of Place', *History Workshop Journal*, 39 (1995), pp.v-vii.

global level.²³ Clearly these forms of power are important in shaping the contours of locales and their pasts, categorising people into class/ racial/ ethnic/ national groupings in specifically named and bounded places. But to see national or global history as mere impositions on the locality, fails to recognise the contested nature of historical productions. While undoubtedly powerful interest groups can and do create pasts, they are not always easily accepted and the changing forms they take are often dependent upon conflicts over identities, which, as Massey points out, are often articulated and defended through reference to notions of timeless traditions.²⁴ More than an imposition or indoctrination, the boundaries of the local pasts are mapped out in contest with national and/or global pasts.

To try and establish some of the workings of local historical production this chapter examines how the journeys to Cape Town and to Van Riebeeck sought to establish local/national places and their pasts, particularly in the geographical context of the eastern Cape. This region was spatially defined by the organisers of the Van Riebeeck festival as stretching from Umtata to Port Elizabeth but excluding Port St Johns "because no festival committee could be formed" there. It was this route that the mail coach 'Settlers' traversed before joining up with the six others to arrive at the festival stadium on Cape Town's foreshore at the end of March.²⁵ This was a particularly troublesome journey, where constituting and fitting local and national proved to be immensely difficult. By following this route (but not keeping entirely to the itinerary) as the mail coach brought "History and pageantry ... together",²⁶ the aim is to examine how spatial definition was, somewhat uneasily and always tenuously, settled.

²³Massey, 'Places and Their Pasts', p.190.

²⁴Massey, 'Places and Their Pasts', p.190.

²⁵Report of the Mail Coach Organising Committee, US, Thom, Box 49. There was another mail coach, 'Durban', which went through towns that are usually defined as being in the eastern Cape: Matatiele (although, somewhat controversially, in terms of the 1994 South African constitution it is placed in Kwazulu/Natal), Queenstown, Fort Beaufort, Alice, Uitenhage and Uniondale. As this chapter largely follows the route of the eastern Cape mail coach 'Settlers', it has been decided to exclude these towns from the eastern Cape in this instance.

²⁶*African Mirror* No 647, 19 November 1951, NFA, FA 2511.

Problems on the coastal road

The difficulties of ensuring local participation in Van Riebeeck's national festival initially arose when towns were encouraged to bring themselves, in various forms, to the 'place of founding'. It appears that in the arrangements for the events in 'Van Riebeeck's city', towns and cities which were defined as "coastal" by the organisers of the tercentenary showed a marked lack of enthusiasm for the festival. Not only was the Cape Town City Council unwilling to provide a large sponsorship, but the local authorities in Durban, Port Elizabeth and East London were all, in different ways, erecting obstacles to participation in the manner required by the organisers. "Coastal" in this instance therefore was not simply a geographical reference but a metaphoric one as well, signifying exclusion from the central activities of the 'nation'. Jacques Pauw, the organising secretary, and Anna Neethling-Pohl, the pageant mistress, had to make special visits to these "towns and ports to arouse interest" in the festival.²⁷

In Durban there was initially a great deal of interest in the festival, largely spurred on by the local branch of the ATKV. Upon its initiative a Durban Van Riebeeck Committee had been established, headed by the mayor Percy Osborn and including in its ranks representatives from the Provincial Education Department, the Durban Chamber of Commerce and the Natal Teachers' Society. The Committee lent its support to a Van Riebeeck festival programme for the city which would avoid "all conflicts between the British, Afrikaans and Bantu", and contain scenes showing "the lasting contribution by the English-speaking people", the trek commando, under Andries Pretorius which defeated the Zulu at Blood River and the "work of the missionaries" among "the Bantu". These were all to form part of the "European" pageant where the Zulu were present but only as obstacles to 'civilisation'. This was certainly a greater presence than had generally been accorded to the 'Bantu' that Van Riebeeck had never met in Cape Town but it did not deviate too fundamentally from the separate nations with separate parts of the festival. At Kingsmead stadium there was to be a separate Zulu pageant and a "non-European township" was to be named after a Zulu leader. All these local festivities were supported by the Durban City Council which decided to spend £2 000

²⁷*Daily Dispatch*, 17 April 1951; *Port Elizabeth Evening Post*, 6 July 1951.

sponsoring the events in the city. *Die Burger* favourably compared the attitude of the Durban City Council on the "*verre ooskus*" [far east coast], with that of Cape Town's, the former, unlike the latter, being prepared to fork out monetary contributions towards Van Riebeeck.²⁸

When it came to setting up a stand at the festival fair in Cape Town, Durban's eagerness which Durban had shown almost evaporated. A recommendation by the Durban Van Riebeeck Committee to the Durban City Council that it take up a pavilion of 10 000 square foot, showing the city in the past and present and costing £8 000 to £10 000, was rejected on the basis of the expense involved and the limited time available to design and construct an effective display. Despite further approaches from the committee, which suggested a much more scaled down exhibit to curtail expenses, and a visit by Keith Pulvermacher, the organiser of the festival fair, who made a "last-minute plea" in the middle of November 1951 for reconsideration on the basis of "national interest" - "bringing the two European sections together" through towns and industries - the council, with the mayor's disapproval, stood by its decision.²⁹ It was not only the expenses involved that influenced the council's decision but a deep suspicion, based on the involvement of Afrikaner nationalist organisations, that the festival in Cape Town could easily become a eulogy for Afrikaner nationalism, turning Van Riebeeck into the trek leader Piet Retief, completely disregarding the "impartial ... history" that the "Voortrekkers tried to get away from all that Van Riebeeck and the Dutch East India Company stood for". In this schema it was feared that it would be the trekker armies who would be accorded the 'accolade' of breaking "Zulu power ... at Blood River" instead of the British. There was thus a great deal of antagonism towards the festival, particularly from those who felt that it should be an opportunity to show Durban and Natal's "own history" with the "blare of trumpets" for the "British settlers".³⁰

²⁸*Natal Mercury*, 24 August 1951; *Natal Daily News*, 28 August 1951; *Die Burger*, 16 October 1951; Minutes, Durban City Council, 21 January 1951, Durban Public Library (hereafter DPL), Microfilm Collection.

²⁹Minutes, Durban City Council, 5 November, 18 December 1951, DPL; *Natal Mercury*, 1 November, 7 November and 14 December 1951; *Natal Daily News*, 13 November, 6 and 8 December 1951.

³⁰*Natal Daily News*, 28 August 1951.

When Van Riebeeck started to move westwards into 'settler country', he encountered even more of an aversion to joining him on the beach at Granger Bay. Port Elizabeth indicated that it was prepared to contribute a float on the 1820 settlers as it related to its 'local' past, but when Neethling-Pohl suggested that it also choose an episode with "a more general theme" there was far less enthusiasm.³¹ Under pressure from Neethling-Pohl (who visited again in February 1952) it reluctantly decided to do the Act of Union as well "because there [was] no one else to do it".³² There was also great difficulty in generating enough money from public subscription for Port Elizabeth's stand at the festival fair. By the beginning of January, a little over half the £2 500 required for staging the exhibit had been raised.³³ As a result, the Port Elizabeth pavilion was "thrown together at the last minute", contained nothing more than "a few pathetic models and uninteresting photographs" and, in the words of one visitor, "all that was missing to give it the right atmosphere is the wind blowing from the Smelly Creek end. In other words, it 'stinks' ...".³⁴

East London had even more problems than Port Elizabeth in acceding to Van Riebeeck's request. It was asked by the festival organisers to depict two of the seventy events in the historical pageants in the streets of Cape Town on 3 and 4 April 1952: "The Statute of Westminster" and "The German Legionaries Become Immigrants in 1857".³⁵ The East London City Council was not altogether happy with this request and motivated for a series of floats which expressed the foundations of the region as part of "South Africa's common history":

It would be led by a float representing the Brig 'Knysna' with John Bailie, the founder of East London, and Captain John Findlay on the bridge, a sailor in the shrouds taking soundings as the 'Knysna' enters the Buffalo Mouth... This would be followed at a short distance by Sir Benjamin D'Urban, his staff and Andries Stockenstrom with a small escort of mounted burghers. All would have to be mounted ... Next could come Sir Harry Smith and [his Spanish Bride] lady Juanna Smith with staff, preceded by an imbongi shouting Smith's

³¹*Evening Post*, 6 July 1951.

³²*Cape Argus*, 18 September 1951; *Evening Post*, 18 September 1951, 1 February 1952.

³³*Eastern Province Herald*, 21 December 1951; *Evening Post*, 4 January and 9 January 1952.

³⁴*Evening Post*, 29 March and 2 April 1952.

³⁵Notes on meeting to establish East London Van Riebeeck Committee, 12 October 1951, CA, 3 ELN, vol 1439, Ref 50/2059.

praises and followed immediately by a small group of mounted native chiefs distinguished by karroses of leopard skin and blue crane feathers as head-dresses. Sir Harry Smith would be at the head of a body of Redcoated Soldiers This would be followed by a squad of German Legionaries ... with Baron van Lingsengen and Sir George Grey and Staff mounted in the van. These would be followed by a group of "Lady Kennaway" girls who fraternise with the Legionaries to the grave concern of a duenna who endeavours to control them.³⁶

This "common history" of South Africa which the East London City Council wanted to portray made reference to founding and settlement, the "sailor in the shrouds" and the "Lady Kennaway girls". But the central focus of events and actions represented was a history of colonisation and conquest, a history where "the lives of blacks and whites ... had become inextricably - and inequitably - intertwined",³⁷ where Harry Smith, as the "Great [British] Chief" who ordered the Xhosa chief Makoma "to kneel and set his foot on the chief's neck" was "cheer[ed]" by "[f]riendly Kaffirs"³⁸ and had his praises sung by a native imbongi. Not only would this assert a local and colonial history as part of a national history, but it would cost little in time, effort and money, to depict these "real historical characters" as they had already taken the stage at the Border Rugby Union grounds in 1948 during the city's centenary celebrations. The only additions required would be the costumes for "Sir Benjamin D'urban and Staff and the Native chiefs".³⁹

This proposal from East London was very much in line with the history that had been taught at many schools in South Africa since the end of the nineteenth century, being characterised by "the one to the sixth Kaffir War that you had to remember", the causes, the consequences and the causes again.⁴⁰ In Wilmot's *History of the Cape Colony For Use in Schools*, chapters

³⁶Letter to pageant mistress, Anna Neethling-Pohl from the Mayor of East London, E H Tiddy, 2 August 1951, CA, 3 ELN vol 1439, Ref no 50/2059. The words in brackets are mine and are taken from the title of the novel by Georgette Heyer, published in 1940, about Harry Smith, his 14 year old 'Spanish bride', Juanna, and the Peninsular Wars. See J Aiken Hodge, *The Private World of Georgette Heyer*, London (1984), pp.57-9.

³⁷C Crais, *The Making of the Colonial Order: White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865*, Johannesburg (1992), p.125.

³⁸C Lewis, *Founders and Builders: South African History in Stories*, Part 1, London, (nd), pp.135, 153.

³⁹Letter from E Tiddy to A Neethling-Pohl, 2 August 1951, CA, 3 ELN, vol 1439. Ref 50/2059.

⁴⁰Interview with Ronette Olivier, a visitor at the Van Riebeeck Festival, 2 September 1994.

were bracketed by the beginning and termination of each of these 'Kafir Wars', while in-between colonial officials are appointed, recalled and re-appointed to deal with the "Kafirs". This is clear from the summaries of the content of each lesson, which were listed at the beginning of the book and repeated at the beginning of the appropriate chapter, providing students, in point form, with the 'essential ingredients' of what they had to learn of 'the past'.

CHAPTER XVI

Kafir War of 1846-7. Sir P Maitland recalled. Sir H.Pottinger Governor. Recalled. Sir Harry Smith Governor. Office of Lieutenant-Governor abolished, and Sir H.F.Young recalled. Annexation of British Kaffraria. Termination of the War.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Governor proceeds to the Frontier. Kafir Wars of 1850-2. Sir Harry Smith recalled. Sir George Cathcart Governor. Continuation of War. Expedition against Moshesh. Battle of Berea. Peace concluded. Losses occasioned by the War. Cathcart System of Grants of Land ⁴¹

On this frontier past Harry Smith was recalled as the man who had "driven" the "Kaffirs ... from their fastness", one of the "Founders and Builders" of "South African History in Stories".⁴² Dorothy Fairbridge gave Sir Harry Smith a very high rating in her imperial world of the Union of South Africa, almost, but not quite, equalling Cecil Rhodes and Jan van Riebeeck. He was praised for

civilizing the Kaffirs, forbidding witchcraft, organizing agriculture and commerce, establishing a police drawn from the Kaffirs themselves, bringing the chiefs Macomo and Tyali to swear allegiance, doing his best in his own energetic and decisive manner to establish peace and government in the new land, upon which some of the Kaffir clans were located as British subjects.⁴³

In Afrikaans school history textbooks the 'Kaffir wars' were also present in the past, but were portrayed with an anti-imperial aura. They were depicted as a clear indication of British "*wanbestuur aan die oosgrens*" [misrule of the eastern frontier] and "[*d*]ie *allegrootste orsaak*

⁴¹A Wilmot, *History of the Cape Colony for Use in Schools*, Cape Town (1871), p.vii.

⁴²Lewis, *Founders and Builders*, p.151.

⁴³D Fairbridge, *A History of South Africa*, London (1917), p.203.

van die Groot Trek" [the main cause of the Great Trek].⁴⁴ Harry Smith as an imperial agent was cast as someone who was "*te haastig met die veranderings wat hy in die lewe van die Kaffers wou teweegbring*" [too hasty in wanting to change the life of the Kaffirs].⁴⁵ Moreover he was also responsible for extending the British realm in southern Africa, not only bringing the 'Kaffirs' but also the trekkers in the area between the Orange and Vaal Rivers under imperial control, defeating the "*held van Bloedrivier*" [hero of Blood River], Andries Pretorius, in the process.⁴⁶

The organisers of the Van Riebeeck festival decided not to call upon Harry Smith and/or the 'Kaffir Wars', cast in any of these moulds. Their previous pasts, which the East London City Council was in part attempting to portray, was at odds with the national history that the organisers of the Van Riebeeck festival had in mind. Founding and settlement were to form the basis of the 'national past' which the mail coaches were to carry through the country and which was to be depicted in Cape Town's streets. It was in terms of this 'settler past' that the meeting between the frontier trader and settler representative, William Rowland Thompson, and the trek leader, Jacobus Uys, outside Grahamstown on 27 April 1837 was turned into a 'national event' and the individuals elevated to the status of historical figures. Harry Smith, the imperial figure, who was at times at odds with the trekkers, was hardly an appropriate figure to take the stage in a settler past that was devoid of conflict. He also had difficulty being re-cast as a Rhodes type Van Riebeeck figure - as a builder of 'the nation' - because his past continually crossed the racial frontiers. The sense of a commonality to be achieved for Van Riebeeck hardly encountered blacks even if it was cast in terms of conquest and colonisation. The eight "Kaffir Wars" between 1779 and 1853, which "SOONER OR LATER you have to know about", found themselves sidelined to the 'coastal road' of the settler past.⁴⁷ They were left out of the *Van Riebeeck Festival Pictorial Souvenir*, a collection of illustrations from South Africa's past that was distributed to schools at the time, and were

⁴⁴W Skinner, *Geskiedenislesboek vir die Laer Skool, Standaard V*, Second edition, Cape Town (1942), p.74.

⁴⁵Skinner, *Geskiedenislesboek vir die Laer Skool*, p.104.

⁴⁶E Stockenstrom, *Handboek van Die Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, Stellenbosch (1922), p.182.

⁴⁷L Marquard and J Mervis, *Blame it on Van Riebeeck*, Cape Town (1952), p.28.

reduced in the pageant to "THE CLASH WITH THE BORDER TRIBES" typified by an "abandoned burnt-down [settler] homestead" which represented "the destruction which the eight border wars caused on the Eastern frontier".⁴⁸ They became an event without history, a "long story, which you can cut short" to insert into a settler past.⁴⁹

The organisers of the Van Riebeeck festival pageant were therefore somewhat taken aback by the suggestion from the East London City council to constitute its participation in terms of colonial conquest rather than being placed in the context of the "convergence of the [settler] roads" in the twentieth century.⁵⁰ Hurriedly, a meeting of the pageant committee was convened and it was decided that "from a national point of view the pageant would be unwisely affected" by "bringing in those episodes which were [not] of national importance". The anticipated foundations of a national history would be disturbed, Harry Smith's imbongi

⁴⁸*Van Riebeeck Festival Pictorial Souvenir Cape Town (1952); Official Festival Programme, p.110.*

⁴⁹Marquard and Mervis, *Blame it on Van Riebeeck*, p.28. This satirical history of South Africa, originally produced for the Van Riebeeck Festival, but which came out later in the year, also ridicules the way that the "Kaffir Wars" were depicted in South African history texts at the time. They list the "CAUSES of the Kaffir Wars" in their "proper order":

NUMBER OF WAR	CAUSES
First Kaffir War	The Kaffirs
Second " "	" "
Third " "	" "
etc " "	" "

They then provide a "log position at the end of the Kaffir Wars":

	P	W	L	D	POSITION IN LEAGUE
Colonists	8	8			1
Kaffirs	8	-	8		2

This satire of the existing narrative highlights the crude, but at same time legitimating, imagery of colonial conquest which was pervasive in school history texts at the time of the festival.

⁵⁰*Official Festival Programme, pp.120-122.*

would add a jarring note and "the whole balance of the pageant" and the past would be "upset".⁵¹

But on 3 April 1952 the past was not upset and the East London float, the Statute of Westminster, paraded through the streets of Cape Town, taking its place alongside the other national events in South Africa's designated settler history. The disagreement which had arisen between the organisers of the Van Riebeeck festival pageant and the members of the East London City Council, however, had not been merely over the representation and content of South Africa's national past. It was also about the definition of race in South Africa, how the nation was constituted, the demarcation of race within the nation and the assignation of space to all. Once the mail coaches started on their progressions through South Africa, the *ritmeester* [journey master] conveyed Van Riebeeck's festival with all these problems to the towns en route as together they sought to contextualise the assigned communities into local/national histories.

Different routes to the nations

In many senses the journey of the mail coaches was an attempt to recreate the "*tradisie van groot en landwye Afrikaanse volksfeeste*" [tradition of large and countrywide Afrikaner folk festivals] of 1938 and 1949.⁵² In 1938 the movement of ox-wagons from the various centres was used to create local and national identities, in which individuals embarked on their own travels, associating the space of the trek with personal journeys of identification with an Afrikaner past. The "*fees van die Ossewatrek*" [festival of the Ox-wagon trek] of 1938 very self-consciously traversed a "*geskiedenispad van Suid-Afrika*" [historical road of South Africa]. From Cape Town to "*Simon van der Stel se dorp*" [Simon van der Stel's village], from Swellendam's republics to Graaff Reinet where "*Scheepers begrawe le*" [where Scheepers is buried], from the Vrouemonument to Paardekraal, in a "*eindlose tafereel*" [endless tableau] was "*Afrikanergeskiedenis voor die Afrikaner uitgesprei*" [Afrikaner history was distributed to the Afrikaner]. With the help of a map sponsored by Mobil Oil, showing the routes of the

⁵¹A Neethling-Pohl to E Tiddy, 22 August 1951, CA, 3 ELN vol 1439, Ref 50/2059.

⁵²*Die Burger*, 9 April 1952.

wagons, it was possible to follow, along with Andries Pretorius, Carolus Trichardt, "*Die Vrou van Carolus Trichardt*" [The Wife of Carolus Trichardt], Erasmus Smit, Sarel Cilliers, Piet Refief and under the watchful gaze of "*Die Vrou van Suid-Afrika*" [The Woman of South Africa], "*die spoor van die Voortrekkers*" [the track of the Voortrekkers] on the road to the Voortrekker Monument and the site of the battle of Blood River.⁵³

There were incidents on the route of '38 which indicated that the local festivals were not altogether successful in their promotion of a united Afrikaner *volk* - in Bloemfontein the wagon was pulled by a group of women in protest against naming the streets near the coloured and 'native' location after Voortrekker leaders, in Koppies the speakers were constantly barracked by supporters of the Prime Minister, Hertzog, and in the final ceremonies in Pretoria, members of the Garment Workers' Union participated in the proceedings as part of the struggle of the workers against international capitalism - nevertheless, on the whole, the response to the trek was overwhelmingly positive, providing a "unique moment of cross-class mobilisation".⁵⁴ Clearly the organisers thought that they had achieved a breakthrough in terms of arranging festivals, defined the method as an "*Afrikaanse feestegniek*" [Afrikaner festival technique] and when, in 1949, the moment arrived for the opening of the Voortrekker Monument, dispatched a group of *rapportryers* [dispatch riders] to cover fifteen routes and collect messages from the "*hele blanke bevolking*" [entire white population] to carry in their knapsacks to Pretoria.⁵⁵ By the time of the 1952 Van Riebeeck festival, it was being claimed that this technique had "created so much interest that ... Australia studied this method of

⁵³*Die Burger Voortrekkermemorial-Byvoegsel*, 10 October 1949; 'Die Pad Van Suid-Afrika: Ossewatrek van die Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereniging (SAS&H)', chart sponsored by Pegasus and Mobil Oil, on display in Cape Provincial Nature Conservation Museum, Citrusdal.

⁵⁴*Die Burger Voortrekkermemorial-byvoegsel*, 10 December 1949; L. Witz, 'Servant of the Workers: Solly Sachs and the Garment Workers Union, 1928-1952', MA, University of the Witwatersrand, (1984), p.268; A Grundlingh and H Sapire, 'From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual? The Changing Fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrializing South Africa, 1938-1988', *South African Historical Journal*, 21 (1989), p.20.

⁵⁵*Die Burger*, 9 April 1952; 10 December 1949; Rapportryers-Reelingskomitee, *Die Roeteboek Van Die Rapportryers*, Johannesburg (1949).

linking up festivals with a view to applying it during the Australian Commonwealth celebrations ... [by] running canoes down Australia's main waterways".⁵⁶

There were organisational and symbolic continuities between the journey of the mail coaches of 1952 and the treks of 1938 and 1949. Utilising similar ATKV structures, the journeys were organised around the idea of "*trekke deur die hele land na 'n sentrale punt*" [treks throughout the country to a central point].⁵⁷ Through the pageantry and the writing of local pasts, these journeys, like the '38 trek, intended to gather history together under its ambit. The organising secretary for the journey of the mail coaches was M C Botha, the organiser of the 1949 inauguration of the Voortrekker monument, who many had automatically presumed would be in charge of the entire Van Riebeeck festival and who had expressed reservations that the festival was losing its association with an Afrikaner past. Indeed, the emphasis on an Afrikaner nationalist past at Ohrigstad and the inclusion of the image of the *boerevrou* in many of the local pageants points to the greater role that Afrikaner nationalist organisations, with their experience and structures from '38 and '49, had in creating the local pasts for the Van Riebeeck festival than they had in the streets of Cape Town where the national settler past had to be negotiated very carefully.

But the mail coaches could not branch off on their own and establish a national route that did not lead to Cape Town and Van Riebeeck. Those who presented local pasts for the mail coaches were warned early on by the organising committee that they had to adhere strictly to the theme of the festival, "*Suid Afrika Na Drie Honderd Jaar - Die Bou van 'n Nasie*" [South Afrika After 300 Years - The Building of a Nation].⁵⁸ At a most obvious level this meant reversing the route of colonial conquest to the interior that the Great Trek celebrations of 1938 and 1949 had traversed, with the mail coaches now returning to the place of founding on the sands of Granger Bay. The mail coaches themselves were also associated with a very different type of history than the ox-wagons. Whereas the latter were linked to a specific set

⁵⁶Letter from J Pauw, Organising Secretary Van Riebeeck Festival to Mayor of East London, 28 June 1951, General Purposes Committee Report Book, East London City Council, File 50/1756.

⁵⁷*Die Burger*, 9 April 1952.

⁵⁸*Die Burger*, 4 April 1951.

of events and a list of personalities in an onward progression, the mail coaches had to reverse the time of colonial conquest to return to the moment of founding. With physical time such a reversal was impossible, so the mail coaches, the media of nationing, focused back into a moment of timelessness, situated between 1952 and 1652. They were symbols which evoked an almost nebulous "golden" "romantic" age, a "*goeie ou tyd*" [good old days] which was not likely to generate controversy over its historical representation.⁵⁹ Emphasis was placed upon the appearance and construction of the mail coaches, the type of wood used, and the craftwork required.⁶⁰ In "quality, lighting and composition", they moved as if part of "a Constable painting".⁶¹ When the mailcoaches arrived in Cape Town on 31 March 1952, it was the blast of the bugles, the "*vrolike perdespanne*" [sprightly teams of horses], and the "*appelblou skimmels*" [dappled roans] which made a "*man se hart lekker te laat voel*" [a man's heart feel good].⁶²

In this moment of timelessness it was not history as personality and event that linked the "*hart van die ... Drie-eeue-fees*" [heart of the Tercentenary Festival] with the "*afgeleenste uithoeke van Suid-Afrika*" [remotest corners of South Africa], but the development of communication in the making of modern South Africa.⁶³ In the days when the mail coaches had traversed the country - and there was some uncertainty as to when this precisely was - the interior was "*nog nie in kaart gebring nie*" [not yet on a map].⁶⁴ It was the History of white settlement which was seen as having brought people onto a map, a grid which was "able to say of anything that it was this, not that; it belonged here, not there".⁶⁵ The mail coaches signified the process of the demarcation of boundaries in South Africa. In 1952, when South Africa's national road network was in the process of construction - with the "Road of South Africa", the N1,

⁵⁹SAR&H 'Verkeerswee: Die Verhaal van Vervoer'; *Die Burger*, 1 April 1952.

⁶⁰Van Riebeeckfees: Bou van die Poskoetse, 9 August 1951, SABC, 28/17-18 (51); *Pretoria News*, 18 August 1951.

⁶¹*Cape Times Week-end Magazine*, 19 April 1952.

⁶²*Die Burger*, 1 March 1952; Arrival of the Mail Coaches in Cape Town, SABC, 18/76-83(52).

⁶³*Die Burger*, 1 April 1952.

⁶⁴SAR&H, 'Verkeerswee: Die verhaal van vervoer'.

⁶⁵B Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London (1991), p.184.

providing the "backbone" from which "ribs radiated" - the mail coaches were seen to represent a bridge between "*die eeu van die ossewa en die eeu van die masjien*" [the century of the ox-wagon and the century of the machine].⁶⁶ They were signifiers of the era of 'modern' communication, the national roads, the modern harbours, the extended rail networks and the emergent air routes, all of which had mapped South Africa as a modern nation.

In this modern nation of "networks", "routes", "ribs", "roads" and "bridges" with its timeless past, the Afrikaner as 'race' which had been constructed in the treks of '38 and '49, became, along with the 'English race', outdated and pre-national. With the Van Riebeeck festival and the journeys of the mail coaches, these 'two races' were now to disappear as a moment of founding was constituted as ever present in the time of the modern nation. The festival founded a "European nation" which had always been there, and "to whom we owe our discovery".⁶⁷

What defined the locality's position and participation in this discovered and recovered exclusive modern South Africa was how "events of great importance to the development of our Nation occurred here for the first time". Through the movement of the coaches across the South African landscape and its daily interruptions for festival performances and history collection, the nation was localised and the local was nationalised. Local committees were directed to devise their own programmes, "provided they adhere strictly to the theme of the Festival as set out in the memorandum which has been accepted as the basis of the celebrations".⁶⁸ There were guidelines for the local history which was to be produced for conveyance by the coach to Cape Town. It could not exceed fifty foolscap pages and had to contain:

1. Founding and early history
2. Development of local government
3. Religious, social, educational and cultural development, historic buildings, architecture, museums, art galleries, monuments, hospital services, etc.

⁶⁶T V Bulpin, *Discovering South Africa*, Cape Town (1983), p.7; *Die Burger*, 1 April 1952.

⁶⁷*Official Festival Programme*, pp.99, 87.

⁶⁸Memorandum on Van Riebeeck Festival Local Committees, attached to letter from Pauw, Organising Secretary Van Riebeeck Festival, to Mayor of East London, 28 June 1951, General Purposes Committee Report, East London City Council, File 50/1756.

4. Development of agriculture, commerce, industries and mining, railways, bridges, roads, irrigation schemes, etc.
5. Local heroes, battles, inventors and other local figures who became well-known, famous, or even notorious.⁶⁹

The sense of notoriety was not specified but in terms of the requirement to produce a shared interpretation of a settler past it could not upset the "primary" purpose of "the constructive growth of South Africa". To become significant, a local history had to be placed "against the background - or in conjunction" with the given national context of founding and development. Famous local heroes could either appear on stage in this "general history of the country" or add a brief, but not upsetting, touch of colour through their 'notoriety'. In this way the organisers sought to ensure that the local history did not "degenerate into a dry summary of insignificant, purely local events".⁷⁰ If it did not conform to these requirements, then its past lost meaning and History. So Grahamstown proclaimed in its pageantry for the mail coach, that "just as Van Riebeeck was the First Settler in South Africa", it was "the capital of the Eastern Province, ... the historic centre of the 1820 Settlers," and could "show that many important men lived here." They too, were "Great South Africans".⁷¹

Conveying the mail coaches and the local histories to Cape Town were the *ritmeester* and his assistants. There were no women on board the coaches in their journeys between towns because it was regarded as "*vermoeiend*" [tiring].⁷² This was a marked contrast to the trek of 1938 where women had travelled alongside the men and played a central role as stoic, suffering *boerevroue* on the much more arduous route of the ox-wagons, taking their place in the colonial conquest of the interior. In 1952, the women did not traverse the timeless road of modernity but would welcome the men to their home at the place of founding as Maria van Riebeecks. Dressed in seventeenth century costume, the wives of cabinet ministers and

⁶⁹Memorandum on Van Riebeeck Festival Local Committees, 28 June 1951, General Purposes Committee Report, East London City Council, File 50/1756.

⁷⁰Minutes, Mail Coach Organising Committee, 2 April 1951, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/1; Memorandum on Van Riebeeck Festival Local Committees, 28 June 1951, General Purposes Committee Report, East London City Council, File 50/1756.

⁷¹'The Building of a Nation: Grahamstown's Contribution', Script of Performance by the Grahamstown Amateur Dramatic Society, Cory, MS 6442.

⁷²M C Botha to Mr Gaum, 12 February 1952, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/12.

members of the festival committee and the wife of the leader of the United Party would act as hostesses at an "old fashioned garden party" on the foreshore to greet the men after their strenuous travels.⁷³ Women were to build and prepare the home at the place of founding so that 'their men' could settle, with relative ease, once they had discovered and recovered.

The journey of the mail coaches sometimes also included "due consideration for the non-Europeans".⁷⁴ Following the general guidelines for "non-European" participation in the Van Riebeeck festival, 'natives' who could not use the "national road as the main highway" into town, and who had to live in a fenced "location", separated by at least 200 to 500 yards from the 'European' area, had to enter another past.⁷⁵ The daily progress of the coach enabled the drawing of boundaries within the locality, separating out "the presence of the Native population" as "non-Europeans". In some localities, the coach bearing the transported past would first make a short stop at "*die lokasie*" [the location] before 'progressing' to the white settlement. Schoolchildren from the location would sometimes be allowed to ride in the coach provided they took their place at the back of the coach in the special place reserved for "non-European servants" who would look after the teams of horses.⁷⁶ Typically, the radio commentator described "*Die naturelle*" [the natives] thronging together to welcome the coach in "*een groot swart massa*" [one great mass]. The mayor delivered a brief address, the "*bekende naturelle volkslied Sokielelo Afrika*" [famous native national song/anthem Sokielelo Afrika] was sung and the coach moved on.⁷⁷ The brief, almost hurried, passage through the "location" served to distinguish the space of the "native people" from that of colonial territory. In a powerful spatial reversal, the coach routinely emphasised that behind the perilous native frontier, where the "Kaffir Chief Makana" made his "treacherous attack on Grahamstown", lay

⁷³Official Festival Programme, p.69.

⁷⁴Report, Mail Coach Organising Committee, US, Thom, Box 49.

⁷⁵Natal Mercury, 31 January 1952.

⁷⁶Minutes, Executive Committee Mail Coach Organising Committee, 21 January 1952, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/1.

⁷⁷Poskoetsfees Graaff-Reinet, 6 March 1952, SABC 28/80-82 (52).

the "'made' roads" and "events" of civilization.⁷⁸ In this way each locality, incorporating the separate "location" and the "town", were enveloped by a "white civilisation" which would regulate and determine the placement of the 'non-Europeans'. The servants on the mail coaches were thus only given special temporary permits to stay in accommodation in Cape Town, between 31 March and 7 April so that they could be near to the horsestalls. "*Langa-lokasie*" [Langa-location] was considered too far away from the horses for whom they were in "*vaste diens*" [permanent service] from early in the morning until late at night.⁷⁹

Skaduwee oor die groot feespad [Shadows over the great festival road]⁸⁰

Getting the localities to partake of the nation and its history was not as easy as was originally envisaged. Twelve mail coaches were planned for, each to be financed by a local authority, with the Rembrandt Tobacco Corporation providing motor cars "painted in the Van Riebeeck colours" and covering "all expenses incurred in connection with the personnel ... en route". While the "great and esteemed help" of Rembrandt was forthcoming - it also agreed to provide loudspeakers and, as a gesture to indicate the historical nature of the proceedings, not to distribute free samples or pamphlets advertising its products - the local authorities were not as willing to paint themselves as Van Riebeeck and spend £800 sponsoring a coach. Some members of the Johannesburg City Council, for instance, considered the mail coaches to be a total waste of money as they contained no historical significance. One member even jokingly remarked that they might as well be sending flying boats from the Vaal Dam to Table Bay. In the end only seven mailcoaches were donated and many towns found themselves excluded from the itinerary and "off the [nation's] route".⁸¹

⁷⁸*Grocotts Daily Mail*, 21 February 1952; Script, "The Building of a Nation: Grahamtown's Contribution", Cory, MS 6442.

⁷⁹Letters from M C Botha to the Organising Secretary Van Riebeeck Festival and the Secretary of the Cape Town Branch of the ATKV, 13 February 1952, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/8.

⁸⁰*Die Burger*, 8 March 1952.

⁸¹Report, Mail Coach Organising Committee, US, Thom, Box 49; Letter from MC Botha to J C Pauw, 12 September 1951, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/8; *Die Vaderland*, 28 March 1951.

There were coaches from the Cape, Pretoria, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, Germiston and Durban, all named after the respective town or district councils which had provided the sponsorship. The eastern Cape, however, was particularly troublesome. Not only did the East London City Council want Sir Harry Smith and his imbongi in the People's Pageant in Cape Town, but there was little enthusiasm in the eastern Cape for grasping the "*geskiedkundige geleentheid*" [historical opportunity] and riding the mail coaches out of the "mists" of time.⁸² Not one town council between Port St Johns and Knysna was prepared to assume financial responsibility and it seemed, by mid-1951, that the eastern Cape would be "eliminated from the national festival". This was something the organisers claimed "We cannot allow". From Idutywa to Blue Lillies, from Blaaukrantz to Witteklip, the chief organiser of the Van Riebeeck festival called upon "the goodwill of the Eastern Cape communities". The Afrikaans daily newspaper in the eastern Cape, *Die Oosterlig*, urged the "*Oos-Kaaplanders*" [East Cape people] to find a way to raise money for the mail coach. If the East London and Port Elizabeth city councils were not prepared to pay for the coach, the editor of *Die Oosterlig* suggested that the momentum should be started "*iewers in die binneland*" [somewhere in the interior]. The physical and metaphoric coast was clearly perceived as unwilling to "*inskakel by die res van die Unie*" [connect with the rest of the Union].⁸³ At one stage it was even suggested that if these coastal locales did not participate, the coach 'Durban' should pass through those towns in the eastern Cape that wanted to join the journey of the timeless past to Cape Town and Van Riebeeck. Passing the hat around, though, eventually raised enough money and the eastern Cape coach was "borne" by city councils of Port Elizabeth, East London, King Williamstown, Umtata, Hankey, Fort Beaufort, Mossel Bay, Humansdorp, Knysna and Komgha.⁸⁴

⁸²SAR&H 'Verkeerswee: Die verhaal van 300 Jaar van Vervoer'.

⁸³Minute 8489 of the General Purposes Committee, East London City Council, 19 March 1951. The General Purposes Committee recommended to the Council that it resolve not to participate in the celebrations by providing a historic Mail Coach at an estimated cost of £800; Letter from the General Organising Secretary of the Van Riebeeck Festival to the Mayor of East London, 28 June 1951, General Purposes Report Book, East London City Council, File 50/1756; *Die Oosterlig*, 1 June 1951.

⁸⁴Telegram from M C Botha to Paul Reyger, 5 June 1951, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/8; Letter from the Mayor of Port Elizabeth to the Mayor of East London, 19 June 1951, stating that his council has decided to donate £250 towards a stage coach and requesting East London Council to assist in raising the further £550, General Purposes Committee Report Book, East London City Council, File 50/1756; Minute 9474 General Purposes Committee, East London City Council, 12 July 1951. The Committee recommended to the Council that it contribute £200 towards constructing a coach representing the eastern Cape; Report Mail Coach Organising

Naming the coach required that its many parents arrive at an agreement. There was no name that immediately sprung to mind that would encompass this mixed and contested heritage. The directive from the mail coach organising committee was that coaches not be given "historical names", but must take the name of a single town or city which provided the sponsorship.⁸⁵ In this way these centres would become markers of national progress, linked to the place of founding by the movement of mail coaches which suppressed regional, provincial and historical differences on their timeless journeys into the past. With the eastern Cape there was a problem in naming the coach after one town as not only was there joint sponsorship, but it also would have accentuated the disputed historical marking of locales: the clashes over origins, traditions, boundaries and capitals. Some "regional name ... [had] to be devised" and even this was contentious as the boundaries of 'the region' were not clear. Towns and villages which were incorporated into Route 7 complained that as they were nearer to the western Cape they did not fall into the "Eastern Cape" and did not want to be considered part of the latter.⁸⁶ Ultimately a name was found, one which reflected both a settlement on the historical patterns and a fit with the national festival of 'founder nations'. The coach on Route 7 was given the special name of 'Settlers', defining the region as that which "*Afrikaanse Boere ... Britse Nedersetters en ... Duitse Immigrante*" [Afrikaner Boers ... British settlers ... and German immigrants] inhabited after Van Riebeeck had landed.⁸⁷

On 14 February 1952 the coach 'Settlers' departed from the "thriving town" of Umtata, hooves ringing on "its formed and macadamised streets", towards the past of Cape Town's "bright future."⁸⁸ This Umtata, as conceived and given life by the Historic Committee of the Umtata Van Riebeeck festival, aroused the imagination and

Committee, US, Thom, Box 49.

⁸⁵Minutes, Mail Coach Organising Committee, 25 May 1951, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/1.

⁸⁶Letter from the mayor of Port Elizabeth to the mayor of East London, 19 June 1951, General Purposes Report Book, East London City Council, File 50/1756; Letter from Pauw to M C Botha, 4 March 1952, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/7(2).

⁸⁷Letter from Pauw to M C Botha, 4 March 1952, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/7(2).

⁸⁸Report, Mail Coach Organising Committee, US, Thom, Box 49; *Umtata: Fragments of its history and growth*, Compiled by the History Committee of the Umtata Van Riebeeck Festival Committee (1952), p.9.

the feelings and aspirations of those pioneers of Umtata, through whose proud lot it fell to be the town's first "Fathers". [E]merging from the hut where the first meeting of the Municipal Council was held, they gazed over the expanse of veld and at the struggling, ugly village, and were filled with the ambition to turn the scattered native huts and unsightly wood and iron structures into a well-ordered town with ... up-to-date buildings.⁸⁹

The "clean wide streets" of Umtata held great promise, "in retrospect and prospect", for the unfettered progress of the 'Settler' coach. They provided the orderly centre to and from which routes radiated "to every district" in the 'Native Territory'.⁹⁰

On board the mailcoach, on its initial short journey within the streets of Umtata prior to departure, were the Mayor and Mayoress, the Chief Magistrate, the Deputy Commissioner of Police and ministers of various churches. They were escorted to the city hall by members of the public who used all means of transportation, from horses to bicycles and cars. After they alighted, a copy of the history of Umtata, which contained an account of the male white fathers of the town who were scarcely able to believe the "metamorphosis that ha[d] actually taken place" since they had founded, was handed over to the *ritmeester*. In the town's history for Cape Town and Van Riebeeck were E.J. Klette, "one of the pioneers of German stock", T.L. Kriel, "one of the first Afrikaner pioneers and leaders", W.T. Strachan, "The Peacemaker", R.V. Laverley, "one of the first inhabitants of the Tembuland side of Umtata" and N. Quirk, "the driver of the first train to enter Umtata".⁹¹ Umtata's ordered past fitted in with what the organisers of the Van Riebeeck festival had laid down as the criteria for local celebrations. The narrative of the history that was required needed to extract a shared interpretation of a settler past, leaving the local history as a series of virtues and vices, of great men and a series of 'historic' scenes, each distinct from the other, but all repeating the founding event. Umtata was so sure that it had secured its past within these categories that

⁸⁹*Umtata: Fragments of its history and growth*, p.9.

⁹⁰*Umtata: Fragments of its history and growth*, pp.9, 8, 14.

⁹¹*Umtata: Fragments of its history and growth*, p.9, illustrations 9, 11, pp. 6, 7, 18; Minutes of Meeting of Local Van Riebeeck Festival Committee, Umtata, 18 January 1952, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/7.

it was "destined to take a prominent place amongst the towns of South Africa." The future held out the promise of "progress, a bright commercial welfare, modernity and prosperity".⁹²

Pride of place in the history produced for the mail coach went to two chief magistrates, who had ensured that the 'natives' themselves brought an end to "the gross misrule of the chiefs" by annexing "the entire country". Capt Matthew S. Blyth, under whose "guidance the Fingos voluntarily taxed themselves" and Major Sir Henry G. Elliot, "affectionately known by the Natives as Meja" (one wonders whether he had any imbongi?) provided this "bloodless" route to settler modernity. In its shadow came native modernity, re-routed through the Bunga - "or Native 'Parliament'" - and its detailed management of national development "in keeping with the stage ... which the native people, as a race, have attained".⁹³ While the local branch of the ATKV performed a tableau of historical events in an evening program at the Recreation Ground before the mail coach departed, the African schoolchildren rendered a series of choral verses and dances in their own section. The new founding fathers rode the coach out of town, and while the non-European men edged towards it, only those who were 'servants' got a ticket to ride at a place in the back.⁹⁴

Once 'Settlers' had departed from Umtata, on its daily journeys through parts of the eastern Cape and "*groot naturellegebiede*" [large native territories] to Cape Town, in areas where the temperature sometimes reached 102 degrees fahrenheit, the ordering, clarity and definition that Umtata had formulated began to fade.⁹⁵ "*Skaduwee*" [shadows] began to fall over a "*groot stuk van die groot feespad waarlangs derduisende mense uit alle dele van die land op Kaapstad gaan toesak*" [a large portion of the large festival road where thousands of people from all

⁹²Umtata: *Fragments of its history and growth*, p.15.

⁹³South African Tourist Corporation, 'South Africa's Transkei and East London: Information for the visitor', (pamphlet), Johannesburg, nd; *Umtata: Fragments of its history and growth*, p.9; illustrations 9, 11; pp.6, 7, 18.

⁹⁴Minutes of Meeting of Local Van Riebeeck Festival Committee, Umtata, 18 January and 7 February 1952, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/7.

⁹⁵Letter from A. Snyman, Ritmeester on Routes 6 and 7 to the Secretary of the Native Affairs Dept, 3 December 1951, CAD, NTS 9787/400 Part 1; *Evening Post*, 5 March 1952.

parts of the country will converge on Cape Town].⁹⁶ As the coach moved towards the town named in 1812 by the British Colonial Secretary after Lieutenant Colonel John Graham, the man who fancied himself as a black chief and "'through whose spirited exertions the Kaffir hordes have been driven from that valuable district'",⁹⁷ there seemed to be little enthusiasm for "this great day" when the coach arrived and Van Riebeeck landed. Instead of "a busy metropolis teeming with bustling crowds, restless transport, towering buildings and smoking chimneys", Grahamstown, "the city of colleges and schools", found it difficult to take its "part in nation building".⁹⁸ The editor of *Grocott's Daily Mail* had to put in a special plea that this was "the only real [day] where all races stand an equal chance of paying tribute to those who have made the history of South Africa".⁹⁹

The 'real problem' was that Grahamstown's history had come to an end in the 1840s with the closing of the frontier after Sir Harry Smith, that "swashbuckling cavalier" who had "retreated with Moore to Corunna [and] advanced with Wellington from Talavera to Waterloo", rode into town and "brought comfort to a worried people and disaster for a scheming chief".¹⁰⁰ According to D H Thomson, the senior History master at Kingswood College, and author of the history of Grahamstown written for the Van Riebeeck festival, the "efficient and exuberant" Colonel Harry Smith displaced the Xhosa chief Hintsa from the "the steep and rocky hills where he sat in his tiger-skin kaross" and Grahamstown "set her house in order". With the Native chiefs now acknowledging that "the kraal of Grahamstown was too large to be attempted", the process of reconstruction and development began apace.¹⁰¹ "Houses were rebuilt, rusty businesses' locks removed and fields cultivated afresh". In this historic moment,

⁹⁶*Die Burger*, 8 March 1952.

⁹⁷Quoted in B MacLennan, *A Proper Degree of Terror: John Graham and the Cape's Eastern Frontier*, Johannesburg (1986), pp.23, 148.

⁹⁸D H Thomson, *A Short History of Grahamstown*, Grahamstown (1952), p.34; *Grocott's Daily Mail*, 27 February 1952.

⁹⁹*Grocott's Daily Mail*, 26 February 1952.

¹⁰⁰Thomson, *A Short History of Grahamstown*, pp.2, 27.

¹⁰¹Thomson, *A Short History of Grahamstown*, pp.15, 27.

"relieved of the burden of self-preservation" a new Grahamstown was born, the "City of Saints", the sleepy hollow, the "resting place of Rip Van Winkle".¹⁰²

A future "younger generation of settlers", borne of the frontier, now took up the pen rather than the plough and the rifle. Under their guidance the history of the City of Saints, from 1840 to 1952, became an antiquarian curiosity, which was "interesting to observe". Located and labelled as the "western window" of the "most progressive town" on the frontier, the "enigma" of its future history followed the path of the new railway line which passed it by.¹⁰³

To extricate itself from the "burden of this short history" and become part of the modern South African nation, the settlers of Grahamstown had to become "history's vassals" and take an oath of fealty to Jan van Riebeeck.¹⁰⁴ The "people who ... remember[ed] much of the olden days" had to be spoken to and events which had been passed down by "word of mouth" recorded. "Long forgotten lofts [and] attics" had to be ransacked and the "hundreds of old letters, books, cuttings from old papers" collected and deposited in the "safe" custody of the local historical centre, be it museum or library.¹⁰⁵ In this process of collecting and ordering history, the traditions "passed down to us by our fathers" would become modernised and would enable Grahamstown to take its place with more ease in the 'Settlers' coach on its way to Van Riebeeck's landing.¹⁰⁶

Although for many years after 1952 tourist brochures still spoke of a "turbulent past when Makana's plumed hordes poured down on the defenders of the garrison outpost", in Grahamstown's history written for Van Riebeeck, Harry Smith, the "swashbuckling cavalier" who brought an end to the "depredations of the Ndlambis, Makanas and Hintsas", became the "sturdy Sir Harry Smith on his proud steed", the man who united the "men and women", the

¹⁰²Thomson, *A Short History of Grahamstown*, pp.27-28, 30, 1.

¹⁰³Thomson, *A Short History of Grahamstown*, pp.30, 32, 24, 1.

¹⁰⁴Thomson, *A Short History of Grahamstown*, Foreword; *Grocott's Daily Mail*, 4 March 1952.

¹⁰⁵*Grocott's Daily Mail*, 4 March 1952.

¹⁰⁶*Grocott's Daily Mail*, 4 March 1952.

"frontier Boer and British settler" of Grahamstown to fight "side by side".¹⁰⁷ From "calling a halt to the westward trek of the Natives", Grahamstown became the Athenian defender of civilisation, "education" and "achievement", playing a "vital role in the building of a strong, virile and enlightened nation".¹⁰⁸ Onto the tableaux of the past strode the 1820 settlers, the English Jan van Riebeecks, each with his own contribution to the building of the nation and its settler traditions.¹⁰⁹ Grahamstown discovered a lengthy list of firsts. It was "the centre of the first telegraphic experiment" in South Africa, the "first town in South Africa" which applied to be part of the "first democratic institutions in South Africa" and become a municipality, where the first woollen cloth factory was established and where "the identification of the first South African diamond" occurred. And pride of place went to ... "CURTAIN UP. Pause for preliminary action. WATCH STAGE until Dr. Atherstone commences cutting" "the first surgical operation in South Africa performed under a general anaesthetic".¹¹⁰

To become modern, Grahamstown also had to remodel itself so that it did not become a "stagnant hollow". What this entailed was "more imagination", the "establishment of secondary industries" and "creating regular employment" for the natives who, it was claimed by the local

¹⁰⁷Publicity and Travel Department, South African Railways and Municipality of Grahamstown, 'Grahamstown: Eastern Province' (pamphlet), Johannesburg (1963), p.2; Thomson, *A Short History of Grahamstown*, p.2; *Grocott's Daily Mail*, 29 February and 3 March 1952.

¹⁰⁸Thomson, *A Short History of Grahamstown*, pp.2, 23, 30; *Grocott's Daily Mail*, 29 Feb, 3 March 1952. This was the image of Grahamstown that increasingly became evident in tourist pamphlets. A pamphlet distributed by the Grahamstown publicity association in 1994, for instance, makes passing references to the "frontier days" and its past as a "military outpost" but the emphasis of the "historical heritage" is on the "imposing public buildings", the "many places of worship", the "excellent schools" and the "air of cultural diversity" (Grahamtowns Publicity Association, 'Grahamstown', pamphlet, Grahamstown, 1994).

¹⁰⁹As was seen in chapter one, this association between Van Riebeeck and the 1820 settlers was not a new one. The point being made here is that it was only in the 1950s that this idea firmly started to take root, when the concept of a white settler nationalism was being broadly promoted through association with Van Riebeeck.

¹¹⁰*Grocott's Daily Mail*, 27 February 1952; Script of Performance by Grahamstown Amateur Dramatic Society, 'The Building of a Nation: Grahamstown's Contribution', 29 February 1952, Cry, MS 6442. This mutated tradition gained greater currency and definition initially in 1965 when the 1820 Settlers Memorial Museum was built and later in the 1970s with the establishment of the Settler Monument and the National Arts Festival (H M J du Preez (compiler), *Museums of the Cape*, Cape Town (1982), pp.18-22; Programme 'Settlers Monument Festival', *Weekend Post*, 22 June 1974).

newspaper, "do not want to work".¹¹¹ Umtata had the "natural advantage" of being located in the centre of "revolutionary change", where an "abundance of cheap intelligent labour" was becoming "more susceptible to the civilising influence". This "pre-requisite of successful industry" was not found by the settlers of Grahamstown.¹¹² Its workforce, it decided, was neither industrious nor modern and preferred to "squat" in the location and "collect unemployment benefits". The residents of Fingo village, whose "forefathers had fought for the white cause ... in the Kaffir Wars", were causing a lot of trouble.¹¹³ Beyond the knowledge of the authorities, "natives from rural areas slip[ped] into the Fingo village", to become known only once they sought employment. To achieve greater control and management, concerted attempts were being made to "bring the Fingo village under the Urban Areas Act" and to make all "Native employees carry a Stupa - a 'Record of Service certificate'".¹¹⁴

The event of the mail coach's arrival in Grahamstown provided a different moment to elaborate upon this project of modernising and controlling the troublesome natives in Fingo village. At the top of Makana's Kop, the point from where "the treacherous attack on Grahamstown was made by the Kaffir Chief Makana", the coach would be welcomed by a mounted commando and escorted into town.¹¹⁵ On the way, the coach would stop at the "location" to ensure that "*die naturelle ... aan die feesvierings deelneem*" [the natives participated in the festivities]. This was a "*geleenthied wat nie verby moet laat gaan word nie*" [an opportunity that must not be allowed to go by].¹¹⁶ The *ritmeester's* enthusiasm for this project, echoed by the Grahamstown Van Riebeeck Festival Committee, was somewhat dampened when the "leaders of the Natives and Coloureds" turned down the invitation to the "people". These leaders, lamented the festival committee, had "denied their own people the opportunity to see a unique spectacle and themselves the chance to offer it a welcome". On

¹¹¹*Grocott's Daily Mail*, 17 and 14 January, 9 April 1952.

¹¹²*Umtata: Fragments of Its History*, pp.14-15.

¹¹³M Roux and M St Leger, *Grahamstown: Fingo Village*, Johannesburg (1971?), pp.2-3, 29.

¹¹⁴*Grocott's Daily Mail*, 9 April 1952.

¹¹⁵*Grocott's Daily Mail*, 21 February 1952.

¹¹⁶Letter from A Snyman, Ritmeester on Routes 6 and 7 to the Secretary of the Native Affairs Dept, 3 December 1951, CAD, NTS 9787/400 Part 1.

the "fine, sunny day" when the coach found its way down Raglan Road to the city, there was no brief stopover in the "location" and the natives did not come out to render their national anthem, "Sokielolo Africa". It passed through onto the city's "main streets", "thronging" with people. The event, however, was "somewhat spoiled for the European audience" when its spectacle in front of the City Hall was obstructed "by large numbers of Native and Coloured children". The "Europeans" had to vacate their seats which had been set aside for them "on either side of the dias". This was the only way that they could see, above the heads of the "children who crowded in the area in front of the onlookers", the arrival of 'Settlers'.¹¹⁷

If Umtata was moulding itself into Van Riebeeck's nation/s and Grahamstown was desperately seeking the nation/s, then the "capital of British Kaffraria", King William's Town, showed little interest in forfeiting its colonial status.¹¹⁸ When it was suggested that, along with other towns in the Border, it should present "The German Legionaries" float at the People's Pageant in Cape Town there was a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the project. As a result, the mayor announced that King William's Town had "reluctantly decided that it could not participate".¹¹⁹ In addition the local history which was produced was not of the type demanded by the organisers of the Van Riebeeck festival. It was merely a 1911 souvenir production of The Coronation and Jubilee celebrations, with a few roneoed pages included to show additional events up to 1952.

The history of King William's Town which was carried to Cape Town aboard 'Settlers' was largely one of royal patronage and presence in the eastern Cape, of Prince Alfred galloping from tribe to tribe in his Royal Borough in 1860, amid wild yells of "'Bota Nkosi' (Welcome Prince)", "son of our great Queen" and "*Daars my Prins!*" [There's my Prince!].¹²⁰ This framework was carried through into the roneoed section of the work in which King William's Town was brought up to date:

¹¹⁷*Grocott's Daily Mail*, 3 March 1952.

¹¹⁸*Souvenir of the Visit of the Settlers Mail Coach to King William's Town*, 26 February 1952.

¹¹⁹*King William's Town Mercury*, 27 November 1951; Minutes of Meeting Convened by Mayor of East London to discuss the inclusion of 'The German Legionaries' in the Historical Pageant in Cape Town, 23 November 1951, CA, 3/ELN File no 1439, Ref 50/2059.

¹²⁰*Souvenir Settlers Mail Coach KWT*, pp.6-7.

1949: A New Chief

At a gathering of the Ndhlambe section of the Gaika at Tshabo, the Chief Native Commissioner installed John Ngwenyuti Makinana as the new Ndhlambe Chief. Around his neck John wore a medallion which was presented to his late father by King George VI in 1947. The stick which he carried was presented by the Prince of Wales [whose praises were sung by the great Xhosa oral poet, S. E. K. Mqhayi¹²¹] to his father in 1925. Three hundred natives, mostly clad in European dress, attended the ceremony. In customary fashion, and with great enthusiasm, the new Chief's praises were sung by the "Mbongi" or Chief's poet".¹²²

This was affirming the colonial basis of the town, with the royal family acting as a metaphor for the continuous 'triumph' over the "barbarians" and the subsequent 'dressing' of the natives in "decent", praiseworthy "European clothing".¹²³

Thus, on 26 February 1952, when 'Settlers' bounded into town, there was a great deal of enthusiasm for Van Riebeeck, not the founder of the nation, but "The Man Who Founded S.A's First Colony at the Age of 33". This fitted more with nineteenth century images of Van Riebeeck that had been propounded by the settlers in the eastern Cape and later by Cecil John Rhodes. Van Riebeeck was not the mere "instrument of policy" but its shaper, the 'man on the spot' who, as much as the British would have done and later did, left "no stone unturned to ensure the healthy development of the colony".¹²⁴ On the coach's arrival at the Victoria Grounds it was welcomed by the mayor, the choir from the Charles Morgan school sang "the Bantu National Anthem" and a pageant recalled South Africa's history in a "series of graphic tableaux".¹²⁵ The highlight of this dramatisation was "The Kaffir Wars (19th Century)" performed by Excelsior School:

... a dozen British Redcoats in their brilliant uniforms faced an equal number of black warriors with weapons poised for action. In a brief moment of action, one soldier fell "dead" on each side Afterwards, the "black" warriors caused

¹²¹J Opland, *Xhosa Oral Poetry*, Johannesburg (1983), p.8.

¹²²*Souvenir Settlers Mail Coach KWT*, roneoed section, p.11.

¹²³*Souvenir Settlers Mail Coach KWT*, pp.6-7. See J Comaroff, 'The Empire's Old Clothes: Fashioning the Colonial Subject', paper presented at the South African and Contemporary History Seminar, University of the Western Cape, 5 October 1993.

¹²⁴*King William's Town Mercury*, 26 February 1952.

¹²⁵*King William's Town Mercury*, 28 February 1952.

a diversion on the grounds when they pursued some Native spectators with their mock spears.¹²⁶

The road to the modern nation "of cars, trains and aeroplanes" had been diverted by white warriors in black masks.¹²⁷ But much as Sir Harry Smith had done in Grahamstown, and Major Elliot in Umtata, "the tumult was quickly quelled", allowing the mail coach to progress on its somewhat troubled journey to the coastal road and beyond to greet Van Riebeeck.¹²⁸

Sir Harry Smith's Town

Down the Buffalo River, at the terminal of "a chain of forts" on the road to King William's Town was the "fighting port" of the frontier, originally given the name Port Rex by the colonial authorities.¹²⁹ On Christmas Day 1847 it was re-born and baptised 'London' by Sir Harry Smith KCB, "The Hero of Aliwal", and the following year, christened East London to distinguish it from its namesake.¹³⁰ A little over one hundred years later, at the "close of an industrially spent century", East London threw a lavish birthday party to celebrate, not its founding but its naming as part of the "workshop of the world".¹³¹ Over a hundred years "of municipal development", the garrison had progressed into a town and then a city, which had become a modern commercial centre through the "busy cranes" of its "British port" and on "the back of a sheep".¹³²

This process of modernisation, through municipal and economic development between 1870 and 1948, was given History through backward linkages with Britain and the colonial frontier, "a new Era in which the old spirit of the City will prevail", and would materialise in the

¹²⁶*King William's Town Mercury*, 28 February 1952.

¹²⁷*King William's Town Mercury*, 28 February 1952.

¹²⁸*King William's Town Mercury*, 28 February 1952.

¹²⁹M H Taylor, *A History of East London*, East London (1952), p.5.

¹³⁰D H Reader, *The Black Man's Portion*, Cape Town (1961) p.4.

¹³¹*Daily Dispatch East London Centenary Supplement* (1948), p.66.

¹³²*Centenary Supplement*, pp.34, 4; *East London Centenary Official Souvenir Brochure and Programme*, East London (1948), p.154.

"fighting port".¹³³ These "past accomplishments" were the basis for its "future prospects" and forward linkages into becoming part of the nation, "spreading East London's name and fame".¹³⁴ It had "local firms with national reputations" and while great men did not live here (as they did in Grahamstown), "nationally known products [were] made here".¹³⁵

When Mayor Fox introduced East London to Van Riebeeck in 1952, he re-called its tradition of two great white races defending the eastern "frontier" of Western civilisation. It was this "human principle", derived from the colonial heritage of empire and appropriated by East London, that he wanted Van Riebeeck to convey to Cape Town. This endowment would demonstrate "one people" united in the face of the challenges which were confronting "our country" and the 'Western world', from the 'East'.¹³⁶ Van Riebeeck received this offering with some trepidation. He was pleased at the content of 'racial unity', but not so certain about the civilising 'tradition' derived from the colonial frontier. Sir Harry Smith and his imbongi were definitely not going to be allowed to parade down Adderley Street.

While, in the face of Van Riebeeck, Fox was attempting to assert East London's place in the nation through its supposed frontier antecedents, it was still the frontiering of commerce that dominated East London's local public history in 1952. *The History of East London*, written by the school teacher, Mark Taylor, drew heavily upon the "profound and accurate" East London Centenary supplement of the *Daily Dispatch*, keeping to "the story" and providing the "glimpses of history".¹³⁷ In the distance was the story of "East London and the tribes", followed by 'thick descriptions' of the home front of "Municipal Enterprises", "The Municipal Market", "Electricity", "Municipal Transport" and "Fire Protection", concluding with "Cultural Growth" and "Industrial Progress". As in 1948, through municipal process and

¹³³*Centenary Supplement*, p.66.

¹³⁴*Centenary Programme*, p.154; *Centenary Supplement*, p.42.

¹³⁵*Centenary Programme*, p.154; *Centenary Supplement*, p.42.

¹³⁶Taylor, *History of East London*, introductory message.

¹³⁷The two key histories in the Centenary Supplement which Taylor drew upon were 'The Story of East London: From The Buried Past to 1948' by B H Dodd, and 'Glimpses of History: East London and the Eastern Cape Province' by Una Long. For a short biography of Taylor see W A Stevens, 'A Tribute to Mark Taylor', *The Coelacanth*, 10, 1, (April 1972), pp.37-38.

industrial development, East London was set for an expansion that would "compare with the boom periods experienced by the Rand and Port Elizabeth", and thereby make its contribution to the nation and become part of national economic history.¹³⁸

As the frontiering of race and commerce competed and cooperated for East London's Van Riebeeck vista, two other seemingly disparate processes were starting to stake their claims to the public arena in the city. These were the growth of younger generations of "South African" white workers and Africanist intellectuals. Young white workers in East London had been drawn into skilled/supervisory roles during the Second World War. To maintain and assert their position against a 'British' 'craft tradition', they increasingly asserted a South African 'first' nationalism. "Apprenticed without artisan control, skilled without craft", they "contested the narrative of the 'old country', its primordial nature, the inventiveness of its traditions of labour and the ... foundational representations of community". Similarly, the ANC Youth League's discourse of Africanism broke with the "conventions of the conservative patriarchy and of the educated, cautious old guard" in the locations of East London. This was reproduced in the parallel narrative of African nationalism, whereby women's local struggles over "beer-brewing, lodger's levies [and] registration of domestic service contracts" were recast in young masculine national terms, "defiant of authority" and asserting an "invented Africanist past and present, of which they were an integral part".¹³⁹ "Salvation of the African people would not come from foreign nations, but as a result of their own efforts - from themselves".¹⁴⁰

When 'Settlers' crossed the Nahoon bridge on 22 February 1952 and "clopped clopped" up Oxford Street, it was confronted by these "doubly politicized nationalisms of race".¹⁴¹ Robbie de Lange, the "young East Londoner, who worked on the S.A. Railways", "with no special prospects" and who had come "a very long way from humble beginnings" to become the

¹³⁸Taylor, *History of East London*, p.29.

¹³⁹G Minkley, 'Border Dialogues: Race, Class and Space in the Industrialisation of East London, circa 1902 - 1963', PhD thesis, UCT (1994), pp.181-2, 179, 331, 325.

¹⁴⁰*Daily Dispatch*, 5 April 1952.

¹⁴¹*Daily Dispatch*, 1 March 1952; Minkley, 'Border Dialogues', p.356.

youngest and only Afrikaans-speaking city councillor among the "colonial chaps", led Van Riebeeck into town.¹⁴² The young Miss K Vitzthum, who took a group of students from the Duncan Village Teachers' Training and Practical School to the pageant as part of "their training in civic responsibilities" was stopped by "young men brandishing sticks and claiming to be members of the African Youth League".¹⁴³

Faced with these contests on its public stages, East London was somewhat undecided over its mature parentage when Van Riebeeck arrived in 1952. Was it still on the racial and/or commercial frontier? Or, was it "Finding a Future! Forgetting the Past!"¹⁴⁴ As Councillor Robbie de Lange led the Eastern Province and Border mail coach into town and members of the African National Congress Youth League "barred" "Native students" from attending the pageant at the Border Rugby Union ground, the answer to this question began to take shape.¹⁴⁵ Through defining a national future and finding a national past, the nation began to settle in East London as the arrival of the mail coach signified the moment of the young South 'African' men. Some of these would bear Van Riebeeck to Granger Bay and beyond to the Castle and the settler nation, while others would attempt to ensure that 'his progress' was brought to an abrupt halt. For the moment of the tercentenary it was the former who were able to assert an elevated status for themselves and assist the coach on its way to the landing of the settlers in Port Elizabeth and Cape Town.

Port Elizabeth - The landing of Van Riebeeck's settlers

On 4 March at 9.30 am the mail coach 'Settlers', having travelled through much of the 'border', reached the Zwartkops bridge on the outskirts of Port Elizabeth where "the early

¹⁴²J P Shingler, *Women of East London, 1900 - 1979*, East London (1980), p.47; Interview with Robbie de Lange Snr, 19 January 1994.

¹⁴³*Daily Dispatch*, 26 February 1952; *The Torch*, 11 March 1952.

¹⁴⁴This was the publicity caption for *Westward the Women*, a "gripping, outdoor drama" on circuit at the time, starring Robert Taylor and Denise Darcel, *Cape Times*, 5 March 1952.

¹⁴⁵Mayor's Minute, 4 September 1952, Municipality of the City of East London, p. 36; *Daily Dispatch*, 26 February 1952.

settlers had crossed the first river on their way into the interior".¹⁴⁶ It was welcomed by the principal of the local school who called for more festivals to be held in South Africa. Carnivals, he believed, would help solve conflict because people would develop political amnesia and "work together". The *ritmeester*, in response, echoed these sentiments, and reiterated the message that he had been carrying on his journey throughout the eastern Cape: "I say to you don't talk about race and racialism".¹⁴⁷

The call of the *ritmeester*, A Snyman, to avoid conflict was a little insincere as on the stage of the journey from East London to Port Elizabeth a major confrontation had developed between him and the coachman, J P S Botha. At stake was who was really in charge of the mail coach, expressed in the Afrikaans idiom over who was "*baas*" [boss] and who was "*Klaas*" [roughly = underling]. The latter felt that he was being relegated to the menial tasks of looking after the coach and the horses while Snyman was basking in glory, being feted, wined and dined by all the local authorities. M C Botha had to intervene to try and clear up the dispute. He urged the *ritmeester* and the coachman to act in the same manner that they and others were trying to urge on the locals, to co-operate and share the tasks and organisation equally, and, like "*geesdriftige Afrikaners*" [enthusiastic Afrikaners], to bury their differences for the sake of their participation in "*een van die allergrootste feesplanne van ons volkslewe*" [one of the very biggest festival plans in the life of our volk]. Although the missive from Botha seems to have quietened things down - "*Dit gaan goed of altans beter*" [It is going well or at least better] telegraphed Snyman to Botha nearly a week later - the tensions on 'Settlers' were still discernible as it progressed on its troublesome journey to Cape Town along Route 7.¹⁴⁸

Unaware of the conflict that was taking place aboard the mail coach, the organisers of the local Van Riebeeck celebrations in Port Elizabeth were attempting their utmost to heed the words of Snyman for 'racial cooperation' when he crossed the Zwartkops bridge. There was

¹⁴⁶*Evening Post*, 5 March 1952.

¹⁴⁷*Evening Post*, 5 March 1952.

¹⁴⁸Letter from M C Botha to A Snyman and J P S Botha, 5 March 1952; Telegram from A Snyman to M C Botha, 11 March 1952, INCH, PV 379, A 11/13/7(2).

even some talk of leaving out what was one of the city's major local/national historical events, the landing of the 1820 settlers, from Port Elizabeth's representations because "it would be a slap in the face for Afrikaners". Yet, as other speakers in a City Council meeting pointed out, seeing the Van Riebeeck festival in these terms was a fundamental misunderstanding of its design. It was primarily about European settlement, where modernisation was cast as an alibi for race. "We are dealing with the civilised forces which came to this barbarian country", claimed Dr B Laubscher, who planned Port Elizabeth's stand at the festival fair. It was therefore crucial to depict the 1820 settlers because they, along with Van Riebeeck, were represented as the bearers of 'civilisation' from Europe and the 'English' 'builders of the nation'. Port Elizabeth, as one of the "only two cities on the coast of South Africa where settlers landed", therefore saw it almost as its duty to ensure that the settlers were there to greet Van Riebeeck when he arrived aboard the mail coach.¹⁴⁹

In contrast to the almost shoddy exhibit which Port Elizabeth took to the festival fair in Cape Town and its floats in the People's Pageant which were "overshadowed by efforts costing thousands of pounds", the local festivities which were arranged to coincide with 'Settlers' arrival took on extravagant proportions.¹⁵⁰ "History" was "brought to life" as the "City turn[ed] back the clock" for the 1820 settlers to welcome the mail coach onto the "crowded, bunting-flanked streets".¹⁵¹ The mayor greeted the *ritmeester*, presented him with an illustrated brochure on Port Elizabeth's industries and then accompanied him to the Crusader grounds for an evening of speeches, song, dances and pageantry. The day's proceedings closed with a torchlight tableau where the landing of the 1820 settlers and that of Van Riebeeck were cast upon the same stage, both leading to the moment of proclaimed settler nationhood in 1952.

Boy Scouts, Voortrekkers and Girl Guides, with torches, shaped the southern coast of Africa and three torch-bearers represented Van Riebeeck's landing at Cape Town, while two others played the part of the first two British vessels to call in at Algoa Bay with Settlers. Other torches marked out the years 1652, 1820 and 1952 on either side and in front of the "map" of the coast.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹*Evening Post*, 11 January 1952.

¹⁵⁰*Evening Post*, 8 April 1952.

¹⁵¹*Eastern Province Herald*, 6 March 1952.

¹⁵²*Eastern Province Herald*, 6 March 1952.

The following day extended this process of situating Port Elizabeth and the 1820 landings on this 'settled' national chart. A somewhat hotch-potch procession of 22 floats, representing organisations from the South African Railways to the Red Cross and the Snake Park but excluding all industrial concerns in the city, paraded through the streets in the morning.¹⁵³ The highlight of the proceedings came in the afternoon, when, in a ceremony which paralleled Van Riebeeck's landing at Granger Bay a month later, a group of 1820 settlers attired in period costume came ashore at King's Beach. Those who managed to make it from their rowing boats on to the beach in a dry state - one of the boats overturned and its occupants had to be "hurried off to cars and homes to dry themselves" - were met by their "founding father", the Acting Governor of the Cape, Sir Rufane Donkin (Archdeacon T B Powell), who turned the military camp named after the Duke of York, Fort Frederick, into a city designated Port Elizabeth as his own personal memorial to his wife.¹⁵⁴ As the settlers "brought nineteenth century civilization by the shipful" onto the beach, "roads [were] constructed, permanent buildings erected, the rule of law expanded, organized education introduced", the Baakens Nature Reserve was renamed "Settlers Park" and the city adopted a coat of arms to reflect its newly established "Settlers' heritage".¹⁵⁵ Donkin's personal herald was modified to incorporate two anchors, an African elephant instead of an Indian one, a sailing ship which replaced a plough and, to cement the relationship with Van Riebeeck, three gold rings from the coat of arms of the first Dutch commander at the Cape.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ *Eastern Province Herald*, 5 and 7 March 1952; *Evening Post*, 6 March 1952.

¹⁵⁴ *Eastern Province Herald*, 7 March 1952; Port Elizabeth Publicity Association, 'Port Elizabeth: Your Passport to Sun, Fun and Friendliness', (pamphlet), Image Marketing, Port Elizabeth (1993), p.1; Readers' Digest *Illustrated Guides to Southern and Eastern Cape, including the Garden Route, Country and the Wild Coast*, Cape Town (1983), pp.30-1.

¹⁵⁵ J Snook, *Eastern Province*, Cape Town (1975), p.3; *Eastern Province Herald*, 29 February 1952; Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown Publicity Associations, 'Settlers Heritage' (pamphlet), nd.

¹⁵⁶ Port Elizabeth Publicity Association, 'Port Elizabeth: Your passport', p.1; *Eastern Province Herald Historical Supplement To Commemorate Port Elizabeth Municipal Centenary*, 16 July 1960.

In the years that followed, the city's publicity association could confidently assert, with a rhetorical flourish: "Where would Port Elizabeth have been without the settlers?"¹⁵⁷ It would be incorrect to assume, nonetheless, that the ceremonial landing at King's Beach to greet the Van Riebeeck mail coach as it "roll[ed] on westward to [the] Cape" had settled Port Elizabeth's local past into a national context where race found itself outside of History.¹⁵⁸ The editor of the *Port Elizabeth Evening Post*, for instance, raised some questions about the vast expenditure on the local pageantry, particularly if one took into account the exclusion of "educated ... non-Europeans" from the events in the streets, the stadium and on the beach. He asserted that the eastern Cape, with its 150 years of experience had evolved a superior form of racial control, which was now being neglected by those who were organising the festivities. The eastern Cape system, he maintained, was one where "the best elements among the Cape Bantu and Cape Coloured communities shar[ed] in some of the benefits of Western civilisation, accept[ed] a trusting white leadership" and sung the praises of Sir Harry Smith. Without the "non-European groups ... proudly taking part in the ... festivities" this concept of "Western civilization", where 'good natives' learnt and accepted colonial control, was in "grave danger".¹⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, therefore, although the eastern Cape, and Port Elizabeth in particular, was portrayed as the breeding ground of the 'talented' 1820 settlers and not the "battlefield" of the past, its public history was a constant reminder of the 'Kaffir Wars', military reinforcements landing at Algoa Bay, "marauding blacks" and "routing" the "rascally" Xhosa.¹⁶⁰

The commonwealth of nations

On the afternoon of Monday 31 March 1952 the mail coaches finally reached the 'mother city'. The bugles sounded, the bells rang out, and at exactly 3.50 pm, "perfectly as planned", "in spite of detours", the mail coaches from all the different corners of the land entered the

¹⁵⁷Port Elizabeth Publicity Association, *Port Elizabeth South Africa Souvenir Brochure, 1860 - 1960*, Port Elizabeth (1960), p.23.

¹⁵⁸*Evening Post*, 7 March 1952.

¹⁵⁹*Evening Post*, 5 March 1952. See also the editorial of the *Evening Post* on 12 December 1951.

¹⁶⁰Snook, *Eastern Province*, pp.2-3.

50 000 seater Van Riebeeck stadium on Cape Town's reclaimed foreshore. At the "unexcelled culmination of a long series of glorious episodes", there to welcome the men's nation home were their 'mothers and housewives', all dressed up and waiting to perform their roles as Maria van Riebeecks at the tea party in the middle of the festival stadium (see illustration 12).¹⁶¹

In the mail coach processions across the country and through the towns, space had been found through history, sometimes invented, sometimes reshaped, marked out and emptied, figures drawn upon it and ways made through it.¹⁶² In *Settlers'* time and space, Harry Smith's public domain began to shift its identity until he lost his imbongi and started to sing Van Riebeeck's praises. No longer on treacherous Makana's Kop, he journeyed south, "through streets where once every window had bristled with guns" to a "hero's" welcome at the 'African' settler national monument atop Gunfire Hill in Grahamstown.¹⁶³ After abandoning the "frontier of interaction which caused sadness and hardship" he now found himself surrounded by the "personalities", "individuality", "talents", "contribution", "resilience" and "vision" of the 1820 settlers.¹⁶⁴ The land of the racial frontier was changing to 'Settler Country', and the archivists started discovering "the contribution of British immigrants to the development of South Africa". They "built", "brought", "salvaged", "linked", "put up", "freed", "pioneered", "applied", "spread", "improved", and "produced" South Africa.¹⁶⁵

But the journey of the mail coaches and its culmination on 30 March 1952 did not complete the job and bring about the birth of the whole Settler nation at once. There were still many conflicts over the production of local/national pasts and the 'fit' that was required. East London's participation in the People's Pageant in Cape Town on 3 April 1952 responded to

¹⁶¹Report of Mail Coach Organising Committee, US, Thom, Box 49; *Official Festival Programme*, p.69.

¹⁶²M Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1988), p.127.

¹⁶³*Reader's Digest Illustrated Guides to Southern Africa: Southern and Eastern Cape, including the Garden Route, Settler Country and the Wild Coast*, Cape Town (1983), pp.40-42.

¹⁶⁴South African Television, TV1 religious programme, *Koinonia*, 31 July 1994.

¹⁶⁵*Lantern*, vol XXIX, no 3 (September 1980), Special Edition: Partners in Progress, 1820 - 1980, p.1; see also H E Hockley, *The Settlers of 1820: A Brief History for Use in Schools*, Cape Town (1966).

the contested images of its colonial/ commercial/ racial/ settler past. In keeping with its newly found settler tradition it started discovering its own group of settlers which would form part of the nation. Along with Berlin, Komgha, Stutterheim and Keiskamahoe, it presented "the German Soldier Immigrants" to the nation in Cape Town. These soldiers and immigrants had "come out to reinforce the white settlement" and "although about a thousand men were later sent to India", the organisers of this historic float were sure that the "immigrants left their mark on our way of life".¹⁶⁶

East London's other float was still a matter of deep dispute. Even though the directive had arrived from Cape Town to ban Sir Harry Smith and build the Statute of Westminster, there was still a great deal of dissatisfaction.

Why has the Cape Town Festival Committee not invited us to send a float depicting the history of "British Kaffraria" rather than a political Statute which led to so much strife on the Border... A British Kaffrarian Float would have been appreciated; it would have provided an opportunity of fitting into the Pageant a representation of the progressive expansion and development of the frontier of the Cape Colony... I am of the opinion that if East London makes an effort to depict a political statute which turned South Africa into a sovereign independent State we shall be depicting something that reflects dishonour on the pioneers of British Kaffraria whose loyalty (European and non-European) was ever profound and sincere.¹⁶⁷

The result was that, with Cape Town "passing the buck from West to East" and not showing East London's "real contribution to the building up of South Africa",¹⁶⁸ the Statute of Westminster took on a decidedly different form from that envisaged by the pageant mistress Anna Neethling Pohl and her committee. The float, as scripted in the programme, was intended to highlight the events, negotiations, parliamentary activities and personalities related to the publication of the Statute which "gave independent status to the dominions". The Prime Minister at the time, General Hertzog, who "played an important role in framing the

¹⁶⁶*Official Festival Programme*, p.113.

¹⁶⁷Letter from A W Burton, to East London Town Clerk, 27 November 1951, CA, 3/ELN, vol 1439, Ref 50/2059.

¹⁶⁸Letter from A W Burton, to East London Town Clerk, 27 November 1951, CA, 3/ELN, vol 1439, Ref 50/2059.



Figure 12: The mail coaches arrive for the tea party at the festival stadium, 30 March 1952, *Cape Times*, *The Festival in Pictures*, p.21.



Figure 13: The East London float, "The Statute of Westminster" ("The Commonwealth of Nations"), passes through the streets of Cape Town, 3 April 1952, Cape Times, *The Festival in Pictures*, p.21.

declaration" which led to the statue was expected to feature prominently.¹⁶⁹ Instead the East London float became the Commonwealth of Nations. It consisted of "a little sailing vessel manned by five young ladies of the City", "Miss Britannia", "Miss Canada", "Miss New Zealand", "Miss Australia" and "Miss South Africa" (see illustration 13).¹⁷⁰ This emphasis on the British Commonwealth was not in keeping with the symbolic float of South Africa on the constitutional road to nationhood that the festival organisers had ordered. While Harry Smith was kept off the streets of Cape Town, it was still abundantly clear that from the "Frontier Land of Myth and Majesty" it was still a very "*lang pad Kaap toe*" [long road to the Cape].¹⁷¹ Shaping, mapping, naming and historicising locales into the places of the settler nation derived from Van Riebeeck was, indeed, a most unsettling experience.

¹⁶⁹*Official Festival Programme*, p.122.

¹⁷⁰East London Mayor's Minute, 1952, p.39.

¹⁷¹*Guide to Southern and Eastern Cape*, p.46; *Ons Nuus*, no. 33, 5 March 1952, NFA.

Conclusion: Post Van Riebeeck

6 April 1996 coincided with Easter Saturday and for Capetonians it seemed that it marked the beginning of winter. After days of glorious sunshine, it was a dull, overcast day with intermittent rain. At about ten in the morning I put on my raincoat and went to the statues of Jan and Maria van Riebeeck in Adderley Street to see whether anyone was attempting to observe what had been officially proclaimed in 1952, by an act of parliament, a public holiday entitled Van Riebeeck Day. The intention of the legislation was to commemorate the "founder of white South Africa" as the bearer of "Christian civilization" and, in spite of opposition from Sam Kahn, who proposed an amendment that 1 December, the day that slaves were emancipated, be revered instead, it was passed with few objections and accepted "in a national spirit".¹ Forty four years later, the area surrounding their statues, where, since 1953, annual wreath laying ceremonies had taken place on 6 April, was deserted and Jan and Maria were virtually ignored. I sat in a coffee shop across the way to see if there was going to be any activity. After about two hours, sensing that nothing was going to happen, I went up to the statues to see if anyone had left some sort of mark of recognition of their landing some 344 years previously. The only sign was a small wreath that had been laid earlier in the morning by a group which designated itself as *Afrikaners, Tuine* [Afrikaners, Gardens]. A card attached to the wreath read (and I translate from Afrikaans): "In honour of JAN AND MARIA VAN RIEBEECK, who brought Christian religion and Western civilisation to South Africa, this country's two largest assets."

The large crowds that had gathered to pay homage to Jan and Maria van Riebeeck and those who had fought so vigorously to contest their settled past in 1952 seemed little more than a distant happening on that cold Cape autumn morning. Apart from this one small insignificant grouping, no-one seemed to be paying them much attention at all. Indeed, since 1992, when the mayor of Cape Town, and occupant of the Van Riebeeck Chair, Frank van der Velde, announced that the Cape Town City Council would no longer organise proceedings in front of the statue because it would be "divisive to focus on a one-sided Eurocentric founding of

¹Hansard, House of Assembly, 18 February 1952, pp.1350, 1353; 21 February 1952, pp.1586-7.

Cape Town", the wreath laying ceremony had attracted little public attendance.² The following year, when the commemorations were organised by the Jan van Riebeeck Foundation, the guest of honour, Frank van der Velde, caused a stir by referring to Van Riebeeck as one of the originators of racism in South Africa through instituting slavery and denuding the local Khoi inhabitants of land and cattle.³ Deeply upset by this outburst, the Jan van Riebeeck Foundation in 1994 called upon the Administrator of the Cape, the National Party's Kobus Meiring, to make the keynote address. In his speech, delivered three weeks before South Africa's 'first democratic elections' in front of 75 people seated at the base of the statues in Adderley Street, he refuted allegations that Van Riebeeck was a "racist, merciless, slave driver". Instead he constructed Van Riebeeck as an example of a sensitive team worker and called upon the "new South Africa" to face up to its future likewise.⁴ A few months later, a newly elected Government of National Unity, led by the ANC and headed by Nelson Mandela, announced a new list of public holidays. Van Riebeeck Day (which had subsequently been re-named Founders Day) was dropped along with Republic Day, Ascension Day and Kruger Day. In their place came Human Rights Day (21 March) Constitution Day (27 April, when the elections were held), Youth Day (16 June), National Women's Day (9 August) and Heritage Day (24 September).⁵ There was also some talk, in the wake of the removal of the statue of H F Verwoerd - the prime minister who acquired the appellation 'Architect of Apartheid' - from public display in Bloemfontein, that Jan and Maria might suffer the same fate and be moved to a less prominent place in the city.⁶ Nothing, as yet, has come of this suggestion and it seems that not much more has been discussed in this regard. The overwhelming impression gained at the statues on the overcast morning of 6 April 1996 was that Jan and Maria van Riebeeck have been virtually forgotten in South Africa's public past. Nowadays they find themselves mainly being used in promotional campaigns. One instance of this was when a clothing manufacturer furtively dressed Jan up in their latest designs in the middle of the night in order to draw attention to their company which had just

²*Cape Argus*, 1 April 1992. See also *Cape Times*, 8, 28 and 30 April 1992.

³*Cape Times*, 7 April 1993.

⁴*Cape Times*, 7 April 1994.

⁵*Cape Times*, 8 September 1994.

⁶*Rapport*, 11 September 1994.

been listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.⁷ Another instance was when an environmental awareness group draped Jan in a shroud to protest against the planned shipment of plutonium from France to Japan, possibly via the Cape. Linking Van Riebeeck to the shipment of plutonium as the bearers of real and metaphoric pollution to South Africa, one of the protestors, wearing a mask and snorkel, affixed a sign to the statue calling for "No Shit On Our Shore" (see illustration 14).⁸

The seeming gradual withdrawal of Jan and Maria from the public gaze and the lack of reverence for their landing in 1652 raises the question as to whether their arrival in 1952 and the associated festivities were merely ephemeral vistas, unable to sustain themselves in memory beyond the immediate moment without the ongoing intervention of the central and local government. One way to address this question is to look at the period prior to the festival in 1952, when there had been no single unilinear effort to establish Van Riebeeck as a central figure in South Africa's public past. Yet, as was seen in chapter one, he had begun to acquire a more prominent position in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century through the endeavours of proponents of British imperialism, Dutch and Afrikaans cultural organisations, the institution of standardised textbooks in schools and the publication of his diary as an authoritative text that lent itself to 'genuine' historical debate. Clearly in all these spheres, a form of organised activity was involved in promoting a memory of Van Riebeeck, some of it associated with governing authorities at different levels. But in these organisations and through a variety of forms different meanings were ascribed to founding. Among others, there was Van Riebeeck the *volksplanter* and/or the bearer of Christianity and/or the colonial governor. All these identities depended largely upon the history which was produced to follow in his wake. Although one can hypothetically raise the question as to which of these memories would have become dominant if the tercentenary festival had not been staged, what the government-sponsored festival did in 1952 was to select elements from these various pasts, and to construct a singular Van Riebeeck to indicate the founding of a settler nation, whose history took different roads, at times, but converged on the sands of Granger Bay on 5 April.

⁷*Cape Argus*, 30 September 1996; *Weekend Argus*, 5/6 October 1996; *Cape Times*, 15 October 1996.

⁸*Cape Argus*, 11 July 1992.



Figure 14: "No Shit on Our Shore", *Cape Argus*, 11 July 1992.

A substantial part of this thesis has dealt with how the government, festival committees and particular individuals, sought to establish this singular Van Riebeeck with an associated past that followed his landing through the mechanism of the festival. What is immediately apparent, particularly from chapter two, however, is that there were immense problems in constructing a national settler past for Van Riebeeck in 1952 and that often the resultant history was the outcome of delicate negotiations over which events should be included and how they should be represented. Sometimes it was responses to the opposition of the conceptualisation of the festival and its specific events that shaped the actual displays. These tensions, although they were either negotiated out of or censored from the past, continually bubbled under the surface of the festival and did not create the settled Van Riebeeck that had been planned for.

When this negotiated national past was then taken to locales which were expected to establish local pasts that accorded with this festival of settler founding, the fit became even more uneasy. Specific guidelines were laid down for the type of history that had to be produced, which the mail coaches that traversed the country in 1952 would carry with them on their journeys to Cape Town and to Van Riebeeck. Framing and bounding spaces into places for the settler nation was, however, much more difficult than just following a set of laid down criteria, particularly when local pasts and 'traditions' were out of sync with the 'timeless' identity of 'progress' that the festival sought to convey. As was indicated in chapter five, this lack of correspondence was particularly notable in the eastern Cape, where the colonial fronting of race dominated local pasts. Even though many of the locales took part in the journey of the mail coach on Route 7, there was a general reluctance to participate with enthusiasm in the settler past. Often the gloss which was put on the local histories for Van Riebeeck in the region subverted the intent of the national organisers. On both the national level, as displayed in the streets and theatres of Cape Town, and locally, through the 417 daily journeys of the mail coaches from town to town, it was immensely difficult to construct a singular national past of European settlement that flowed from the beach of Granger Bay. The Van Riebeecks who took centre stage in 1952 were clearly iconised as the founders of these 300 years. But in spite of all the financial, organisational and structural support, much of it emanating from the government, the festival was unable to completely suppress, select and direct other memories into this racially exclusive past.

It was not only in the production of the Van Riebeeck for the festival that there were difficulties in creating a 'national settler past' as History. Crucial to the conceptualisation and execution of the festival and the bringing of its symbols into memory was the emphasis on the visuality of its content. From the pageantry in the streets and on the beaches, to the parades in the festival stadium, the plays in the theatres, the displays in museums, the documentary newsreels and the imaginative descriptions by radio commentators, the festival was intended to be visualised. Yet, while this visual content was generally planned and laid out with care, how it was received and seen was, at times, beyond the control of the organisers. With such a plethora of visual symbols, often confusing and contradictory messages emerged, particularly for the 800 000 people who went to the festival fair on the foreshore (see chapter four). There was just so much to see and do that many interpreted the displays in their own individual ways and, forgetting the essence of the festival they, in part, left Jan and Maria van Riebeeck (Andre Huguenet and Frances Holland) to their own memories at their new home in the Castle.

The one area where the festival most demonstrably floundered in its bid to attract a following for the Van Riebeecks and their 'national past' was in its attempts to lure people who were designated as 'non-Europeans' to view the proceedings and participate in separate events (chapter three). Very few turned up at the festival fair, even on cheap days which were specifically set aside to inflate numbers. For the Native Affairs Department display at the fair, the Griqua performances and the Malay pageant in the stadium, the organisers had to search far and wide before they could find people who were willing to partake of these separate offerings. Sometimes they had to entice the participants by promising material incentives from the government in the future. Indeed, after the festival, one group of Malays was so incensed that after they had agreed to participate in I D du Plessis' pageant the government 'rewarded' them by offering them, within the ambit of the Group Areas Act, what they saw as small, barren, pieces of property in Surrey Estate, while, they claimed, the areas reserved for coloureds were larger and generally in more preferable locations.⁹

⁹Letter from Mr Gool to the Minister of Interior, 3 February 1953, CAD, BEP 321, G7/302. Thanks to Uma Mesthrie for this reference.

There was a variety of reasons why many 'non-Europeans' decided not to go to the festival. Some showed no interest in the proceedings on the foreshore, others argued they were 'too educated' to go and sing and dance for Van Riebeeck, while yet others claimed status as a 'coloured' racial elite. There was also a massive political campaign, primarily orchestrated by affiliates of the Non-European Unity Movement, which called for a boycott of what they termed the 'Festival of Hate'. One of the notable aspects of this boycott campaign was that it inverted the symbols of the festival, turning Sheik Yusuf and the bushmen into heroes of resistance and Jan van Riebeeck into the initiator of racial oppression in South Africa. This mirroring of the festival's icons, instead of subverting them as was intended, played a large role in reinforcing and perpetuating their images as key markers in the South African past.

More than the actual designs and activities of the festival organisers, it was this unintended consensual past that enabled Jan and Maria van Riebeeck to reach their positions of prominence as the bearers of apartheid to the shores of a place that was always South Africa. And, despite the lack of activity in front of the statues on 6 April 1996, it is this image that assists them in maintaining their conspicuous role, thus defining the moment of their inauspicious arrival in 1652 as pivotal in South African history. Far from disappearing from the public gaze and being erased from memory, they now confidently assert themselves as beginning "a 350-year struggle for national unity".¹⁰

The constant ambiguity and shifting meaning of this "struggle" enables Jan and Maria to assume a variety of forms in order to find their place in a 'new South Africa'. There is firstly the struggle which supposedly everyone 'fought together', leading to the emergence of a multicultural South Africa constructed as 'The Rainbow Nation'. Jan and Maria bring to this 'rainbow' a component which proclaims a European heritage in Africa. When tourism to the Cape as the "rainbow region" is promoted, actors dress themselves in their seventeenth century costumes and go on display at the tourist information centre alongside the Bushmen from

¹⁰Speech delivered by Cyril Ramaphosa, Chairperson of the Constitutional Assembly, at Sharpeville, 10 December 1996, at the signing of the constitution. Thanks to the office of the Executive Director of the Constitutional Assembly for supplying me with a copy of this speech.

Kagga Kamma Nature Reserve, the Hermanus whale-crier and the Cape Malay.¹¹ For National Museum day in May 1996, the "fun-packed programme" at the Castle, where Jan and Maria took up residence in 1952, included Scottish dancers, a military band and performances by the Muzzle Loaders Association, the University of Cape Town choir and Jan van Riebeeck.¹² On the same day as Nelson Mandela was present at the launch of Govan Mbeki's book, *Sunset at Midday*, which relates the final years of resistance to the apartheid regime, he was also guest of honour at the 75th anniversary of Jan van Riebeeck primary school in Cape Town. The school presented him with a donation to the Mandela Children's fund and a Jan van Riebeeck cap which he donned for his appearance in front of the television cameras.¹³

The 1952 tercentenary festival is re-called to memory in a similar multicultural milieu. In May last year, a "Cape Malay Dance Musical", entitled *Rosa*, was presented by Bo-Kaap Productions. The musical takes place in the imaginative early 1800s when the Cape is under Dutch rule (presumably the Batavian Republic) and the governor, having made more than a hundred year leap in time, is Simon van der Stel. The storyline revolves around a nobleman who falls in love with a Malay slave girl. The story is secondary to the musical items, which glorify the essentials of a 'Malay culture' that was constructed and promoted by I D du Plessis, with the 'exotica' of *krans* and cushion dances encompassing "strange mystical powers". One of the 'exclusive' items that it presents is the lingo dance. Completely overlooking the struggles over Malay participation in the pageant organised by Du Plessis, in 1952, the promotional material for the musical proudly proclaims that this dance is being performed "for the first time on the professional stage since the Van Riebeeck Festival".¹⁴

The narrative of a "new national cultural heritage" was also proclaimed in '300 Years: The making of Cape Muslim Culture' exhibition, which ran at the Good Hope gallery in the Castle

¹¹R Gordon, C Rassool and L Witz 'Fashioning the Bushman in Van Riebeeck's Cape Town, 1952 and 1993' in P Skotness (ed), *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen*, Cape Town (1996), p.269. See also *Cape Argus*, 26 November 1993.

¹²*Athlone News*, 15 May 1996.

¹³*SATV News*, 15 May 1996.

¹⁴*Athlone News*, 15 May 1996; Programme for *Rosa*, presented by Bo-Kaap Productions at the Baxter Theatre, University of Cape Town, May 1996.

in April 1994.¹⁵ Giving this exhibition its impetus was the tricentenary event that, instead of elevating Sheik Yusuf into a Malay Van Riebeeck, venerated him as the bearer of Islam to the Cape. Promotional material for the exhibition labelled it as according Muslims "a place" in South African history.¹⁶ A constant tension in the exhibition was this attempt to advance a Muslim identity and past in South Africa and, at the same time, not to reproduce the static, essentialist, ethnic categories of 'Malay culture'. It was in this vein that the historian Kerry Ward devised historical panels for the exhibition, one of which contained details about the Van Riebeeck festival and the Sheik Yusuf presentation in 1952. Unlike the musical *Rosa*, which had recalled the festival in positive terms, this display was very self-consciously concerned with showing to visitors how Malay and Muslim culture had been manipulated in the tercentenary (as opposed to the tricentenary) festival in order to further the interests of the apartheid government and its emerging programme of separate ethnic nations. It is debatable, however, whether in the context of the overwhelming dominance of the 'living displays' of "Muslim craft traditions", such distinctions were taken note of by the thousands who flocked to the Castle in April 1994 to visit the exhibition.¹⁷

Probably the primary vehicle for producing this 'new South Africa' as a 'rainbow nation' has been through the vehicle of sports events, the rugby world cup, the African cup of nations, cricket tours by England, Pakistan, India, Australia, New Zealand and the West Indies, and, in its most elaborate form, the bid to stage the 2004 Olympic Games in Cape Town. Here, the Van Riebeeck festival emerges in a similar vein to its appearance in *Rosa* as "history", an event recalled as a happening "a long time ago". On 7 December 1996 at Killarney race track in Cape Town, the main event was a revival of "the once-famous National Van Riebeeck Trophy" which had first been competed for "in the time of the 300 year Van Riebeeck Festival". The naming of the event was considered to be appropriate because the race was a

¹⁵K Ward, 'The "300 Years: The Making of Cape Muslim Culture" Exhibition, Cape Town, April 1994: Liberating the Castle?', *Social Dynamics*, 21, 1, (Winter 1995), p.122

¹⁶Ward, 'The "300 Years"', p.101; *Cape Times*, 4 April 1994.

¹⁷See Ward, 'The "300 Years"' and L Witz, G Minkley and C Rassool, 'Thresholds, Gateways and Spectacles: Journeying through South African Hidden Pasts and Histories in the Last Decade of the Twentieth Century', unpublished paper presented at The Future of the Past conference, UWC, July 1996 for the debate on the images constructed in this exhibition and how they were received.

"National for Classic and Historic cars".¹⁸ For the Olympic bid, the Van Riebeeck festival provided a "history lesson" in the pros and cons of organising such a "razzmatazz". Although there is some recognition that the festival was embroiled in "political controversy" and that it was racially exclusive, the emphasis was placed on the administrative details of "planning an event on a similar scale": the financial record, the structures that needed to be built, traffic control and the responses of the target audience. Indeed, one of the main venues that has been selected for the Olympics in Cape Town is the Culemborg goods yard, the same site where the festival fair was constructed and Van Riebeeck proclaimed to be the initiator of 'civilisation' and South Africa's past and future.¹⁹

But it is not only in this 'multicultural struggle' that the Van Riebeecks appear as markers of the South African national past. Their (and particularly Jan's) major capacity as a signifier is as the initiator of racial domination/oppression and the resultant 350 year 'liberation struggle' on the "road to true democracy and empowerment".²⁰ This was a guise that was produced for Jan by those opposing the festival and it dominated the anti-festival histories that were published. Yet the boycott of the festival itself is hardly recalled in South Africa's emerging national pasts where instead the defiance campaign, which was launched on 6 April 1952, is turned into a pivotal moment of "significance" in histories built around the 'emergence' and 'triumph' of the African National Congress in the face of successive surges of repression.²¹ The temporality of this national past is built around almost a century of ascending and descending troughs and crests of a South African political dynamic, propagating through History until the terminal point is reached as 'victory' is achieved at the top of a wave.²² As

¹⁸*Drive Times*, supplement to the *Cape Times*, 5 December 1996.

¹⁹*Cape Argus*, 25 August 1992.

²⁰Speech delivered by Cyril Ramaphosa, at Sharpeville, 10 December 1996.

²¹T Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, Johannesburg (1983), p.43; J Pampallis, *Foundations of the New South Africa*, Cape Town (1991), pp.197-8.

²²One of the clearest illustrations of this wave movement can be found in the chapter headings of J Pampallis, *Foundations of the New South Africa*: Chapter Fifteen, "The Upsurge of Resistance, 1949-1960"; Chapter Sixteen, "From Sharpeville to Rivonia, 1960-1964"; Chapter Seventeen, "Economic Growth and Political Repression, 1964-1972"; Chapter Eighteen, "The Revival of the Mass Movement, 1973-1977"; Chapter Nineteen, "White Supremacy on the Defensive, 1978-1986"; Chapter Twenty, "Apartheid's Last Stand, 1968-1990". This interpretation of Pampallis' work is a variation of Rassool's critique which tended to see the book as portraying an incremental revelatory approach, where the liberation movement, through "lessons it learnt on the way"

new South African histories are being produced along this wave motion, particularly in public arenas, April to November 1952 has become the period in History when the ANC gained "widespread popular support" and took on a more radical "working class" character, when apartheid became a world issue and when the "The Unbreakable Thread" of "Non-Racialism" in South Africa went through its "formative stage".²³ In the face of the dominance of this 'national' past, the boycott of the Van Riebeeck festival has become relegated to the realms of a forgotten, hidden history, mainly celebrated in the ranks of the Unity Movement as a "massive nation-wide" "achievement" of united opposition to "the state and all its supporting classes".²⁴

Nonetheless, the marking of April 1652 as the moment of colonial/racial oppression and its personification in the image of Van Riebeeck dominates South African public pasts. In the re-make of the movie *Cry the Beloved Country*, which was released in 1996, the conservative white farmer, Jarvis, flies to Johannesburg, after hearing about the murder of his son, aboard an aircraft that is pointedly named Jan van Riebeeck. This self-same Jan also found himself as part of a travelling exhibition, "Our Struggle for land" that was presented in the lodge for slaves of the Dutch East India Company, now the South African Cultural History Museum, in Adderley street. The exhibition, commissioned by the National Land Committee and put together by the staff of the Pietermaritzburg Museum, told a story of land dispossession and resistance to removals in South Africa. Held in the small "postal stones room", in the gaze of reproductions of oil paintings of Jan van Riebeeck, the narrative followed a chronological sequence that was broken down into four phases flowing from oppression to liberation in 344 years: colonial dispossession, the entrenchment of segregation, the apartheid period and the democratic transition. And in the beginning of it all was Jan van Riebeeck who was depicted as carrying out "possibly the first recorded displacement of indigenous people by white settlers

arrived "at its current, correct position". C Rassool, 'Foundations of an New Mythology', *South African Historical Journal*, 26 (1992), p.252.

²³Lodge, *Black Politics*, p.61; Pampallis, *Foundations*, p.198; J Frederikse, *The Unbreakable Thread: Non-Racialism in South Africa*, Johannesburg (1990), p.52. See also *Ulibamba Lingashone*, Directed by Lesley Lawson, Series Director, Lawrence Dworkin, Produced by Afravision, 1993.

²⁴H Jaffe, *European Colonial Despotism: A History of Oppression and Resistance in South Africa*, London (1994), p.169.

in South Africa".²⁵ Just over a month after the exhibition had left the museum and started travelling to other locales, in South Africa the 'first democratic' elections were held for local authorities in the Western Cape and Van Riebeeck, once again, was there. On 29 May 1996, the *Cape Times* proclaimed in a front-page story that not only would the elections bring an end to "a 114-year chapter of white, English-speaking domination of local politics in the Mother City" but also that they were finally closing "the book on colonial rule going back to the arrival of Dutch settlers in 1652".²⁶ Finally, at the end of the year, in a ceremony that overflowed with historical symbolism, Jan van Riebeeck found himself among the thousands of spectators that had gathered to witness the signing of South Africa's new constitution into law by President Mandela. The location of the ceremony, Sharpeville, Vereeniging, was carefully chosen, as a site of historical significance. It was here that the British and Boer armies had concluded their pact in 1902 to terminate hostilities after the South African War and had created the basis of a 'new South Africa' which "effectively disenfranchised the black majority". On 21 March 1960 Sharpeville also bore witness to the increasingly repressive nature of the apartheid government as the police fired on a group of anti-pass protestors, killing 69 people, most of whom were shot in the back. The signing of the constitution at Sharpeville on 10 December 1996 was to bring all this oppression - which, the chair of the constitutional assembly, Cyril Ramaphosa, reiterated, had begun 350 years previously when Van Riebeeck landed - to an end, to "break with the pain [and] ... betrayal" and start "a new chapter" as a "newly united nation".²⁷

If Jan has changed from the meanings ascribed to him by the festival organisers into the inverted mirror image as a racial oppressor that his opponents promoted, then the most remarkable transformation in memory has been reserved for Maria who has altered her race. In the festival of 1952 it was her increased prominence that enabled the organisers to bring the 'white race' from Europe onto the beach at Granger Bay. Her statue, which the Dutch government promised in 1952, arrived three years later and was placed, not next to Jan, but in front of the South African National Gallery in the Company Gardens. In 1967 the Cape

²⁵Text from travelling exhibition, 'Our Struggle for land', Cultural History Museum, April 1996.

²⁶*Cape Times*, 29 May 1996.

²⁷Speech delivered by Cyril Ramaphosa, at Sharpeville, 10 December 1996.

Town City Council decided to move Maria to Adderley street so that she could be alongside Jan. There was an immediate uproar, particularly from within Afrikaner nationalist circles that the statues did not belong together. The statues had distinctly different styles, they represented different epochs in their respective lives when the two were not married to each other and most importantly, the darkness and heaviness of Maria's statue did not fit alongside a much more lighter image of Jan. According to F L Alexander, writing in *Die Burger*, what was required was either a new Jan who would fit in with Maria or a "*nuwe, ligter en eleganter Maria wat by die huidige Jan pas*" [new, lighter and more elegant Maria, to match Jan].²⁸ The City Council preferred not to take heed of these warnings and on 27 November 1968 Maria's "long wait" was over as she joined Jan at the top of Adderley Street.²⁹ And, indeed, the worst fears of the writer in *Die Burger* have been realised. When Ciraj Rassool and I visited the statues in Adderley Street, someone who happened to be crossing the centre island where the statues are situated noticed that we were looking at Maria with interest and came up to us. "*Hulle lieg man*", [They are lying to you, man], he called out to us, "*Sy's mos 'n bruin vrou*" [She is really a brown woman]. The bearers of white civilisation, proclaimed in the people's pageant, the festival fair, the journey of the mail coaches and the landing at Granger Bay in 1952, had undergone a racial metamorphosis which would have horrified the promoters of the tercentenary festival. This was a future past that they neither contemplated nor envisaged as they sought to build a racially exclusive white nation that would last for another 300 years.

²⁸*Die Burger*, 19 October 1967. See also *Die Burger*, 1 and 6 September 1967.

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van der Watt, L 'Art, Gender Ideology and Afrikaner Nationalism: A History of the Voortrekker Monument Tapestries', MA thesis, UCT (1996).

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6 Interviews

(a) Conducted by L Witz (Tape recordings of these interviews are in the possession of the author)

Albertyn, C F, at his office in Stellenbosch, 25 August 1994.

Almond, Joe, at his home in Fish Hoek, 23 September 1994.

Broomberg, Shirley, at her home in Kenilworth, Cape Town, 4 September 1994.

Cilliers, C, at his home in Fish Hoek, Cape Town, 15 September 1993.

de Wet, Sylvia, at her home in Stellenbosch, 23 September 1994.

Dudley, R O, at his home in Elfindale, Cape Town, 24 August 1994.

de Ridder, Cecile, at her home in Verwoerdburg, 10 December 1993.

de Lange Snr, Robbie, at his home in East London, 19 January 1994.

Albertyn, C F, at his office in Stellenbosch, 25 August 1994.

Halliday, Mr and Mrs K, at their home in Pinelands, Cape Town, 9 September 1994.

Kleyhans, Rosalie, at her home in Pinelands, Cape Town, 7 September 1994.

Makalima, Sipho, at his home in Alice, 20 January 1994.

Nkosinkulu, Vuma, at his home in Grahamstown, 25 January 1994.

Olivier, Ronette, at her home in Rondebosch East, Cape Town, 2 September 1994.

Pheiffer, Roy, in his office at the Dept. of Afrikaans and Nederlands, University of Cape Town, 7 August 1992.

Segal, Ronald, at the Vineyard Hotel, Newlands, Cape Town, 14 August 1992.

Taylor, Yvonne, at her home in Sybrandt Park, Cape Town, 21 September 1994.

von Holdt, Sally, at her home in Wynberg, 28 September 1994.

(b) Conducted By Rochidi Molapo

Macozoma, Constance, Langa, Cape Town, 5 September 1993.

Mgijima, Thami, Langa, Cape Town, 23 January 1994.

Ndlumbini, M S "Cappy", Langa, Cape Town, 22 January 1994.

(c) Conducted by others

Keppel-Jones, Arthur, conducted by Prof Alan Jeeves at Queens University, 14 June 1994, *South African Historical Journal*, 32 (May 1995), 11-23.

Ntantala Jordan, Phyllis, conducted by Ciraj Rassool at the University of the Western Cape, 4 November 1993.

Thompson, Leonard, conducted by Lynn Berat, 14 August 1993, *South African Historical Journal* 30 (May 1994), 16-32.

